

Patterns of Newsmaking in Western Journalism

A Content Analysis of Newspapers Across Six Western

Democracies and Five Decades

Thesis (cumulative thesis)

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To My Family

1. Introduction

During the last few decades, the conditions for and the forms of political communication have changed. Currently, the mass media act as the main link between governments, political parties, political actors, and citizens (Habermas, 1990). Most citizens are in touch with the political world only through the media. The mass media are moving to the center of political communication and the media have become the primary provider and most important source of political information in contemporary societies (Hollander, 2007, p. 377; Kunz, 2013, p. 191; Lengauer, 2007, p. 11). Mazzoleni (2008c) has coined the term “media society”, denoting that the media pervade all spheres of social life. Media systems and news organizations in particular have grown increasingly professional and differentiated from their political environment (Hallin & Mancini, 2004a, p. 254) and have become independent of their former financial backers, which were, at least in the European media landscape, primarily political parties and churches (Jarren, 1994, p. 23). At the same time, however, the media have become more dependent on media market developments. Transnational processes such as economic liberalization and political deregulation of media markets have induced commercialization trends of growing concentration, conglomeration and competition of media companies (Croteau & Hoynes, 2006). Newspapers are faced not only with challenges such as declining circulation but also with growing competition from new communication channels due to recent technological advancements. These trends have resulted in pressures to increase efficiency and lower costs, promoting a reorganization of newsrooms and a redefinition of professional roles and skills (Quinn, 2004).

In other words, political newsmaking reflects a complex set of interactions between the *imperatives of the marketplace* and the *professional aspirations of journalists*, and the news is not simply a mirror-image reflection of what happens (Iyengar, 2011, p. 85). “The media now operate according to a specific media logic and [...] are guided by commercial rules in order to maximize the audience shares” (Esser, 2013a, p. 155; see also Hamilton, 2004; Mazzoleni, 2008d; McManus, 1994) and professional rules that imply a distinct set of common journalistic norms and accepted criteria for selecting news material (Hallin & Mancini, 2004a, 2004b). Reporters, columnists, editors, producers, and publishers have the “media power” to select and present politically relevant content according to their own logics, while also triggering and framing public issues and thus influencing political agendas (Dearing & Rogers, 1996;

Habermas, 2006, p. 415; McCombs, Shaw & Weaver, 1997). They are active participants in the formation of political messages (Cook 1998) and have a sizable influence on “what” and “how” an issue is communicated in the public sphere. The mass media are influential players who pursue their own rules and goals when intervening in the formation of public opinions and the distribution of interest (Donges, 2006, p. 572; Jarren & Donges, 2006, p. 329). This circumstance underlines the central relevance of examining how the media *construct* political reality.

The transformation of the public sphere in the direction of “media society” (Mazzoleni, 2008c) or “media democracy” (Jarren, 2008) has resulted in intensified competition for attention. Political actors and organizations have realized that their behavior is becoming increasingly shaped by the rules set by the mass media and that they must thus address this new situation of increased “mediatization” (Donges & Imhof, 2001; Esser, 2013a; Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999). This dissertation assumes that political journalism today is closely linked to the processes of media commercialism and journalistic professionalization and that the commercial and professional imperatives of newsmaking have implications for the functioning of democracy.

Skeptics worry that news production has become less motivated by the need to inform the public driven by democratic responsibilities and now instead intends to offer news that entertains. Scholars argue that this development has harmful effects on democracy and civil life. Bagdikian (1983, 2004), Chomsky (2002), Herman and Chomsky (1998) and McChesney (1999) have warned against the effects of a market-led journalism on society. Critics claim that the public agenda is ever more determined by the market, which leads to the depoliticization of citizens who have increasing difficulties in understanding and evaluating politics (Habermas, 2006, p. 422; Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999, p. 249; Meyer, 2002). A presumed marginalization of political news toward simplification of complex matters, sensationalism, dramatization, privatization, emotionalization, and other conceptions conflicts with the normative demands of a discursive public sphere in which political problems are defined and discussed and solutions sought. This marginalization clashes with the roles that democratic theory expects the mass media to serve (see Benson, 2008; Graber, 2003; Gurevitch & Blumler, 1990; Iyengar, 2011; Norris, 2000; Strömbäck, 2005). First, the mass media should *inform* citizens substantively about politics and *offer opportunities for deliberation*. Noninformation or misinformation, however, obviously undermines the media’s democratic function. Another important role of the media is the *formation of preferences*, which is challenged if the spectrum of topics, sources and perspectives is limited, thereby reducing the probability of unbiased information. *Monitoring*,

interpreting, and *commenting* on the acts of public officials or even *controlling* and *criticizing* the government as further democratic roles seem impossible in a depoliticized news environment, as does the media's ability to *mobilize* voters politically. Mediatized political communication may also cause a decline in political involvement and a rise in political cynicism. However, the media may not solely bear the blame for these circumstances. Politicians, parties, and governments have learned to adapt to responding to the media's production logics (Altheide & Snow, 1979), including their preferred timing, formats, language, and content, to receive public attention, support, and legitimacy (Dayan & Katz, 1992). Politicians have an interest in driving political news in a specific direction, playing up issues, and criticizing or even scandalizing political opponents (Esser & Matthes, 2013, p. 178). At times, politicians portray themselves personalized (i.e., presenting their personal lives) without bringing important policy issues to the fore.

From a more optimistic perspective, van Zoonen (2005) argues that the opposite is true because this new style of popular culture may arouse interest for politics and mobilizing effects of those otherwise excluded or bored (see also Baum, 2003; van Zoonen et al., 2007), but this perspective is not widespread in the scientific discourse.

In sum, this work scrutinizes whether the patterns of newsmaking are uniformly global across time and space or are rather based on country-specific conditions, and this question must be addressed from a comparative angle. This study investigates systematically the impact of commercialization and professionalization on political news. This dissertation expects longitudinal changes on the content of news reports to be shaped by the media's own selection and interpretation logics that may affect readers' political worldviews and discusses the critical undertones that are associated with these long-term developments.

This dissertation tackles these changes by focusing on *print* newspapers and weekly magazines. Other types of mass media, such as TV or the Internet, do not allow researchers to conduct a comparable longitudinal analysis of news content that goes back to the early 1960s, and are therefore less suitable for this analysis. Further, newspaper use is strongly associated with political involvement (Hollander, 2007, p. 383), newspapers are an important source of information for the citizenry, especially in Europe (see Eurobarometer 2012; Pew Research Center, 2013), and are therefore a highly relevant object of investigation.

2. Research Setting

This dissertation takes up two opposing perspectives established in comparative journalism research. The first assumes that there is a blurring of national reporting traditions over time, as news journalism in affluent Western media systems has experienced a slow “homogenization” in covering politics. News journalism has faced homogenizing trends in news practices and content since the 1960s due to technology, globalization, commercialization, and the diffusion of Anglo-American reporting techniques, leading to similar journalistic working routines around the globe (Hallin & Giles, 2005, p. 14). One way to characterize this “convergence” of formerly divergent “news cultures” (Esser 2008) is that media systems have become less closely related to the world of politics and more rooted in the market. Communication scholars (see Caspi, 1996, p. 175; Donges, 2000; Hallin & Mancini, 2004a, pp. 251–282; Lengauer, 2007, p. 31; Plasser 2000, p. 51) have suggested that this convergence in Western journalistic practices is driven by the following: 1) the diffusion of Anglo-American training standards, textbooks and the broad acceptance of U.S. news principles; 2) the growing interaction of journalists using the same prestigious media outlets and news agencies (e.g., global news leaders such as the BBC, *New York Times*, Associated Press); and 3) the imitation of reporting techniques that proved successful professionally (critical expertise, skepticism, pro-active agenda setting) or commercially (audience responses and advertiser-orientation) in the Anglo-American world. In addition, 4) the emergence of global media markets and 5) the universal differentiation from the political field have served as further forces of homogenization of news journalism.

The contrasting perspective does not negate these homogenizing tendencies but neither does it expect them to eliminate the deep-rooted differences caused by cultural traditions and long-established systemic features in national news cultures. These barriers reflect divergent journalistic traditions that showed their distinct contours most clearly in the 1960s and 1970s. The working habits of Western journalists may, to some extent, have become more similar but without dissolving their fundamental nation-specific identities. This perspective maintains that news reporting reflects deep-seated differences because of national media structures, national news cultures and national journalistic traditions. The historical and structural characteristics of these traditions are still assumed to be reflected in the contents of the news media. Moreover, factors such as national policy agenda and national political culture are presumed to affect political news reporting. Taken together, these relatively stable national differences should

prevent political communication systems from adopting homogenized transnational patterns (Esser & Strömbäck, 2012, p. 314).

In summary, one of the key questions in international journalism research is to what extent journalism is increasingly global, in the sense that a variety of interactions across borders has led to a convergence of news practices, or whether cultural and institutional barriers protect national news cultures against homogenization tendencies. Obviously, journalism research has moved beyond simply assuming an increasing homogenization across the board and expects outcomes to be much more complex. In this vein, this dissertation supposes global standards to emerge in certain regions but historical traditions to prevail in others. In other words, the main assumption is that the ongoing transformation of political communication leads to hybrid styles. The crucial questions then are where and how these hybrid styles emerge and with what consequences.

Even though this topic has received substantial attention among comparativists, the available empirical evidence has not yet provided a conclusive answer (Boczkowski et al., 2011, p. 379). Therefore, this dissertation formulates cross-national hypotheses to explore the extent to which media contents in different countries resemble existing conceptual “models” in media systems research and formulates cross-temporal hypotheses to examine the validity of the convergence thesis during the last five decades. To empirically test these hypotheses, this dissertation identifies theoretically grounded indicators that are expected to uncover possible differences in political affairs coverage in daily and weekly newspapers across six Western countries (United States, Great Britain, Germany, Switzerland, France, Italy).

2.1. Research Questions

As outlined above, this study asks whether different patterns of political newsmaking exist *across media systems*. It compares differences in news content with regard to context factors inherent in the political setting and the media setting of each country. The underlying assumption is that differing structural and cultural conditions account for differences in political news reporting across media systems. This dissertation assumes newsmaking to be dependent on both the degree of media commercialism and the degree of journalistic professionalization.

Research Question 1: How does print news coverage of political affairs differ between the six media systems under investigation with regard to the “commercial standards” (i.e.,

sensationalism, emotionalization, negative tenor, common people narrative, privatization of public figures) and “professional standards” (i.e., authenticity, interpretive reporting (why-reporting, contextual reporting), objectivity, transparency) of newsmaking?

The second research question aims to systematically investigate the *changes* in news coverage within systems and discusses potential conditions for these changes. This dissertation examines whether the news production in the past has been shaped more intensively by the political field (serving the needs of political actors and institutions) and whether it is today more closely shaped by the imperatives of the media. In this way, this dissertation addresses a major lacuna in previous research. Empirical longitudinal studies are rare; they are, however, crucial to the field of comparative communication research, as they often refer to *processes*, i.e., changes over time. Hence, longitudinal studies are necessary to understand transformation processes of news content.

Research Question 2: How does print news coverage of political affairs change over time (1960–2007) in the six media systems with regard to the “commercial standards” and “professional standards” of newsmaking?

Another core question this dissertation tackles is whether newsmaking is *converging* due to globalization trends and leading to a more uniform news logic. With hypotheses of the effects of globalization, Americanization, transnationalization and hybridization, this dissertation empirically explores how differences in specific patterns of newsmaking have prevailed or vanished over the last fifty years.

Research Question 3: Can a convergence of national news reporting patterns in daily and weekly newspapers be identified from 1960 to 2007 by looking at key indicators, such as opinion-orientation, scandalization, and negativity?

The final research question discusses the findings in a broader context. Hallin and Mancini’s (2004a) typology of media systems tries to historically explain differences in journalistic practices across systems. This dissertation asks if their oft-cited *typology*, in addition to other typologies, can be applied to *print news content* and if the factors identified therein seem to have receded in explanatory power.

Research Question 4: Can print news content be integrated into existing media typologies such as the one outlined by Hallin and Mancini in 2004?

One important requirement for answering these research questions is to develop meaningful empirical indicators that are assumed to discriminate political affairs coverage in different media systems. Based on a thorough review of previous literature, these indicators will be formulated in the following section.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is complex and challenging, as it intends to elucidate changes in political news coverage in six Western press systems over nearly 50 years by examining a wide range of indicators. The indicators and the cross-spatial and cross-temporal design are derived from and justified by theory. This dissertation is based on a substantial amount of pioneering work, as there is no prime example study upon which it can draw. The first subchapter (2.2.1) of this theoretical section discusses the mediatization thesis linked to political news content. This dissertation is embedded in a research program of the National Centre of Competence in Research *NCCR Democracy* named “Challenges to Democracy in the 21st Century”. The program was initiated by the Swiss National Science Foundation and the University of Zurich and explores how mediatization and globalization challenge democracy today (www.nccr-democracy.uzh.ch). The *NCCR Democracy* has launched various initiatives to define mediatization as a multi-dimensional framework, culminating in the book “Democracy in the age of globalization and mediatization” edited by Kriesi et al. (2013). Chapter 7 “Mediatization as a Challenge: Media Logic Versus Political Logic” (Esser, 2013a, pp. 155–176) and Chapter 8 “Mediatization Effects on Political News, Political Actors, Political Decisions, and Political Audiences” (Esser & Matthes, 2013, pp. 177–201) are based on our *shared knowledge* from various internal discussions, workshops, and progress reports in which I have played an active role. Therefore, this synopsis is considerably influenced and inspired by the literature on mediatization, even though the individual publications of this cumulative dissertation do not take up the explicit terminology of the mediatization discourse. The second subchapter (2.2.2) explains why this dissertation must explore political news journalism from a comparative perspective. These literature reviews provide the basis for defining the empirical indicators needed for the subsequent studies.

2.2.1. Mediatization

The research literature views mediatization as a concept indicating that the media increasingly move toward the center of the social process (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999, p. 211) whereby all parts of society become increasingly mediatized and dependent on the media and their logic (Asp, 1986, p. 359; Asp & Esaiasson, 1996, p. 80; Hjarvard, 2008, p. 113; Schulz, 2004, p. 88; Strömbäck & Esser, 2009, p. 220). The *mediatization of politics* has been conceptualized in a growing body of literature and refers to an increasing media influence over political organizations and actors, political decision-making processes, political events, political discourses, and citizens' political perceptions (e.g., Asp, 1986; Esser & Strömbäck, 2014; Esser, 2013a; Esser & Matthes, 2013; Hjarvard, 2008; Mazzoleni, 2008b; Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999; Strömbäck, 2008; Strömbäck & Esser, 2009). The media have been moving from mere channels of communication to active players in the political arena.¹ Recently, the mediatization of politics has gained speed with the commercialization of media systems and the modernization of politics (Hjarvard, 2008, p. 120; Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999, p. 249). While the mediatization of politics can be studied across the four dimensions of *contents*, *actors*, *organizations and processes*, and *audiences* of political communication (see Strömbäck, 2008; Strömbäck & Esser, 2009), this dissertation focuses on the first dimension.

The historically informed “institutionalist” tradition of mediatization research is particularly promising for studying mediatization (Cook, 2005, 2006; Donges, 2006; Hjarvard, 2008; Ryfe, 2006; Sparrow, 1999, 2006). According to Hjarvard (2008), the media “emerge as an independent institution with a logic of its own that other social institutions have to accommodate to”, and the term *media logic* refers to “the institutional and technological modus operandi of the media, including the ways in which media distribute material and symbolic resources and operate with the help of informal rules” (p. 105). The pioneers Altheide and Snow (1979) introduced the notion of media logic and described it as a specific “format”. Media logic refers to how politics is represented, defined and formatted in the news media and is seen as the engine of the mediatization of politics (Mazzoleni, 2008a). The media adopt their own mode of selecting and framing the news, and politicians who wish to address the public must respond to the media's rules and production logics (Altheide & Snow, 1979). As described by Hjarvard (2008), “one form this adaptation takes is when politicians phrase their public statements in terms that

¹ *Mediatization of politics* is not to be confused with the concept of *mediation*, which signifies the neutral act of transmitting political messages through the mass media (Mazzoleni, 2008b; Strömbäck, 2008; Hjarvard, 2008).

personalize and polarize the issues so that the messages will have a better chance of gaining media coverage” (p. 106). In sum, mediatization is seen as the growing intrusion of the media logic and as an institutional rule of selecting, formatting, interpreting, and constructing political news messages into fields where other rules of defining appropriate behavior previously dominated (see Esser, 2013a, p. 159).

The news media develop into a trans-organizational entity, and in each nation, various factors push those working in this institution toward similar norms and practices (Cook, 1998; Sparrow, 1999). These factors include historically developed professional consensus, intermedia co-orientation, embedding in the same political, regulatory and economic environment, and orientation of their products toward the same national audience (Cook, 1998, p. 70, 2006; Sparrow, 1999, 2006). The news organizations are structured similarly to achieve similar goals; they follow the same basic rules when confronted with the question of what is important and interesting enough to be considered news (Cook, 2005). Journalists follow professional rules when they select their stories (criteria of newsworthiness) and incorporate norms (objectivity, impartiality, neutrality, facticity; see Bielsa, 2008, p. 349; Hafez, 2002; Hallin & Mancini, 2004a; Hjarvard, 2008) into their news production. Cross-national differences in how news journalism has developed are explained by long-standing historical traditions in the formation of news media as social institutions, which shape news discourse in characteristic directions (Benson, 2004, p. 281).

Neo-institutionalism holds that news organizations within various countries become more similar to one another as they seek to differentiate themselves from their political environments and gain independence (Benson, 2004). The rules and norms that govern the media taken as a whole are often more important than what distinguishes one media company, outlet, type, or format from another (Altheide & Snow, 1979, 1988, 1991; Mazzoleni 2008c). Following theoretical neo-institutionalist arguments that treat individual news outlets as components of one collective trans-organizational field within which each society follows similar norms and practices, this dissertation combines all news outlets per media system as *one* aggregate indicator of national reporting style (Cook, 2006; Sparrow, 1999, 2006). The empirical argument for combining the newspapers by country is that for most concepts and analyses central to this study, the effect sizes are greater between national press systems than between newspaper types. This finding, revealed by partial eta squares in a preliminary analysis of variance, justifies the decision to examine the results at the system level.

Media logic has been conceptualized as a hybrid that refers to commercial and professional aspects of media logic (Strömbäck & Esser, 2014, p. 17; see also Hallin & Mancini, 2004a, p. 253).² Based on this theoretical assumption taken from the mediatization literature, the dissertation considers the two most important constituents of newsmaking to be commercialization and professionalization.

Commercialization of journalism (or the commercial driver of newsmaking) pronounces the presentation of news stories in ways that make them easier to sell. It can be argued that news organizations have become more detached from the political system because of growing neo-liberalism and deregulation in most Western media systems; however, the greater independence from the political field has mainly resulted in an increased loss of autonomy in relation to the market (Esser, 2013a, p. 171). This line of reasoning is similar to Mazzoleni's (2008d) understanding of media logic, which refers to the specific narrative techniques, presentation styles and production formats that news organizations use to succeed in a society-wide struggle for people's attention. Journalists become forced to deliver sensationalistic, spectacular, and dramatic coverage of political events (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999, p. 257). Competitive news production presents only a selective sample of newsworthy events and is associated with the depoliticization and marginalization of the core of politics. The commercial aspects of media logic can then be summarized as a focus on the following characteristics (e.g., Hallin & Mancini, 2004a, pp. 278–281; Mazzoleni, 2008b, 2008c; Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999): strategic-framing (rather than issue-framing); personalization and privatization (rather than reporting about parties and institutions); common people narrative and vivid storytelling (rather than defining abstract political problems, ideologies and possible solutions); local news (rather than more expensive international news); and easier marketable negative tonality favoring incompetence, conflict and scandals (rather than positive tonality, consensus and compromise). The commercial features are also linked to the spectacularization of news that relies on emotionalization, visualization, and vivid polarization, among others.

Professionalization of journalism (or the professional driver of newsmaking) means that journalism is differentiated as an occupation and institution from other social institutions, particularly politics (see Hallin & Mancini, 2004a, 2004b). Hallin and Mancini distinguish three

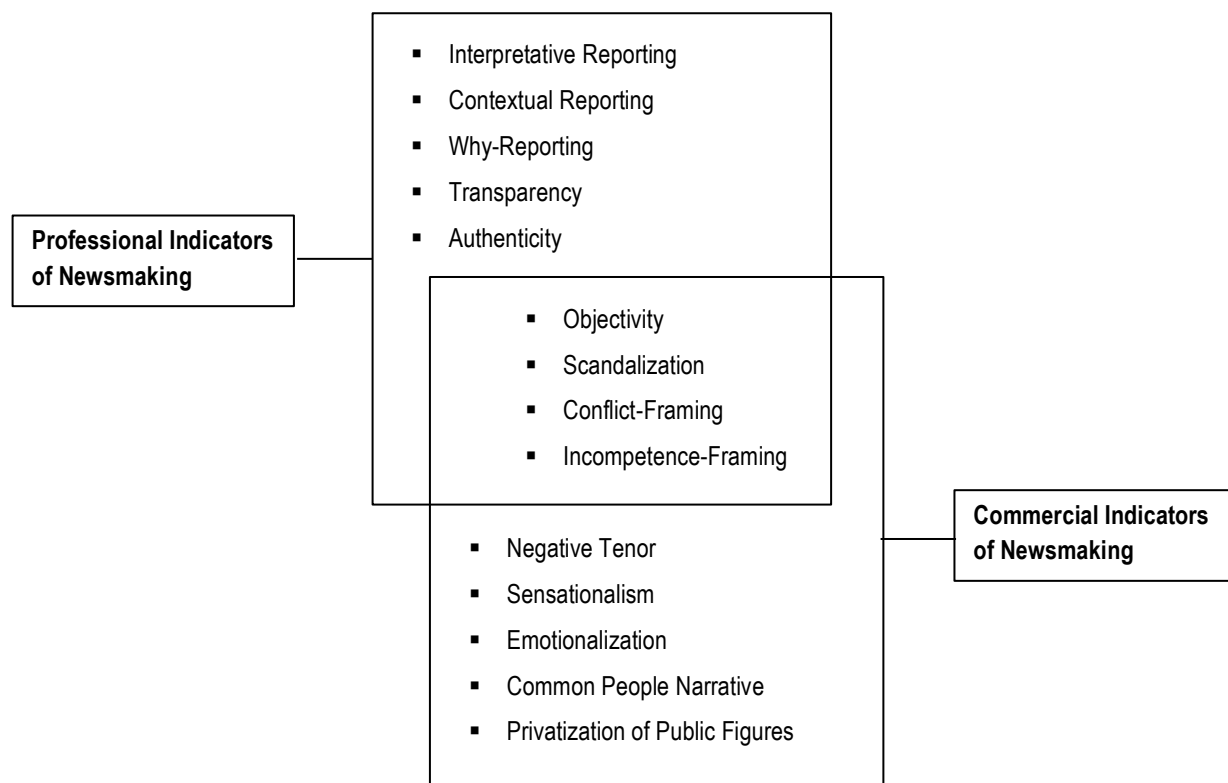
² Other scholars stress that technology is a third key impetus of media logic (see Esser, 2013a, p. 173; Strömbäck & Esser, 2014, p. 17). The technological aspects of media logic address medium-specific possibilities, constraints and consequences of new communication technologies for news production processes.

dimensions to illuminate professional production routines in newsrooms (see also Esser, 2013a, pp. 168–170). First, professionalism means growing autonomy from outside influences and control over one's work. Journalists became more autonomous in the late 1960s. They wanted to be more than a mere mouthpiece of politicians, and they now control, frame, and interpret the flow of political information themselves. This new and proactive kind of news reporting should be more assertive and skeptical (critical watchdog and adversarial attack-dog journalism). Journalists see it as their professional responsibility to make their own decisions on what to cover and how to cover it (Esser & Matthes, 2013, p. 181). More autonomous journalists summarize, contextualize, interpret, analyze, and evaluate politicians' messages (Farnsworth & Lichter, 2007; Patterson, 1993, p. 67). Theoretically speaking, autonomous journalists strive for a role that is active (rather than passive) and report in a more pragmatic (rather than sacerdotal) and adversarial (rather than loyal) kind of watchdog attitude (rather than lapdog attitude) toward politicians. Second, professionalism implies a distinct set of professional journalistic norms (i.e., objectivity, neutrality, impartiality) and universally accepted criteria (news factors such as timeliness, proximity, surprise, conflict) and common rules for selecting material. Third, professionalism signifies a claim to serve the public interest. It allocates democratic functions to the media, such as contributing to enlightened understanding through substantive, unbiased and uncensored information, contributing to public debate and opinion formation through diverse and inclusive issue debates and holding the government accountable in cases of misconduct.

To move from the conceptual to the empirical, Figure 1 connects the two major imperatives of political newsmaking with the indicators used in the four individual publications. It illustrates the close relationship between commercial and professional drivers of news reporting – depicted by the overlapping area – and also shows how commercialization is related to professionalism. One example of such an intersection is the indicator “scandalization”, which has a “professional” core but has been overlaid with a “commercial” facet. A focus on scandal is of high commercial value but is simultaneously connected to the rise of critical professionalism and investigative journalism. Scandalization (but also “incompetence-framing” and “conflict-framing”) can thus be said to reflect a commercially motivated exaggeration of the professionally motivated watchdog function. The indicator “negative tenor” provokes newsworthiness (bad news is more newsworthy than good news), but as I link it less to the watchdog function, this dissertation refrains from classifying it in the overlapping zone. However, it can be argued that the professional ideal of “objectivity” also has a “commercial” core in that commercial pressures

and the need to increase readership and advertising revenues initially began to push partisanship out of newspapers (Chalaby, 1996, p. 320). These pressures facilitated the spread of the objectivity norm, and from this historical perspective, “objectivity” can be categorized into the overlapping area. Although this classification into commercial and professional imperatives is not entirely conclusive, it still shows how difficult it is to disentangle the explanatory factors of newsmaking.

Figure 1: Indicators of Political Newsmaking Used in Cumulative Thesis



In sum, the aim of this dissertation is to determine if these hypothetical expectations of political newsmaking are mirrored in the *content* of the news. The lack of clear empirical evidence is, in fact, a main limitation of many previous studies on that topic. This dissertation expects the degree of media commercialism and journalistic professionalization and their effects on news content to be neither uniform nor static. It assumes the patterns of political news reporting to be context-sensitive and primarily dependent on the professional aspirations of journalists and the degree of media commercialism. This cumulative dissertation links this

general theorizing to specific operationalizations, as it explores the indicators of the professional (see *Publication III*) and commercial (see *Publication IV*) components of newsmaking that are operationalized and covered in this volume.

2.2.2. Comparative Perspective

Patterson (2008) emphasizes the importance of comparative media research by stating “journalism in Western democracies is not one practice but many practices, depending on the historical, market, political, and other forces that have shaped the various news systems” (p. 23). However, one main limitation of the existing research on political journalism is that many studies are grounded in a single national context. This dissertation explores the relationship with a cross-national research design and addresses the shortcomings via a systematic content analysis of newspapers from six established democracies. The cases represent distinct press systems covering different structural characteristics of their media system, political system, and cultural context. These varying contextual conditions provide explanations for the differences and similarities in newspaper coverage.

Therefore, the comparative analysis allows for testing the generalizability of concepts (e.g., the concept of an Anglo-American tradition) and theories (e.g., the framework of media systems outlined by Hallin and Mancini). This dissertation aspires to test existing classifications of cases and drafts its own typology based on extensive content data. It explains differences and similarities in newsmaking with the specific contextual conditions of the surrounding systems and cultures that differentiate the press systems by way of hypothesis-guided research. By doing so, one of the key questions that can be addressed is whether such system characteristics lose some of their relevance for shaping news content due to transnational transformation processes of social change and international exchange, co-orientation, and global interconnectedness.

On the one hand, from an institutionalist perspective, historical-institutional “pathways” of journalism explain *differences* in political news. This logic allows for the grouping of news systems with similar norms, media systems and journalistic traditions. As will be shown in the individual publications of this cumulative thesis, the national level is found to be highly important for explaining differences in journalism. Statistical tests have revealed that the commonalities within the press systems are usually more important than the differences within the systems. Based on typologies of media systems (see Hallin & Mancini, 2004a; Mancini, 2005; Polumbaum, 2010, Williams, 2005), scholars distinguish three historical-institutional

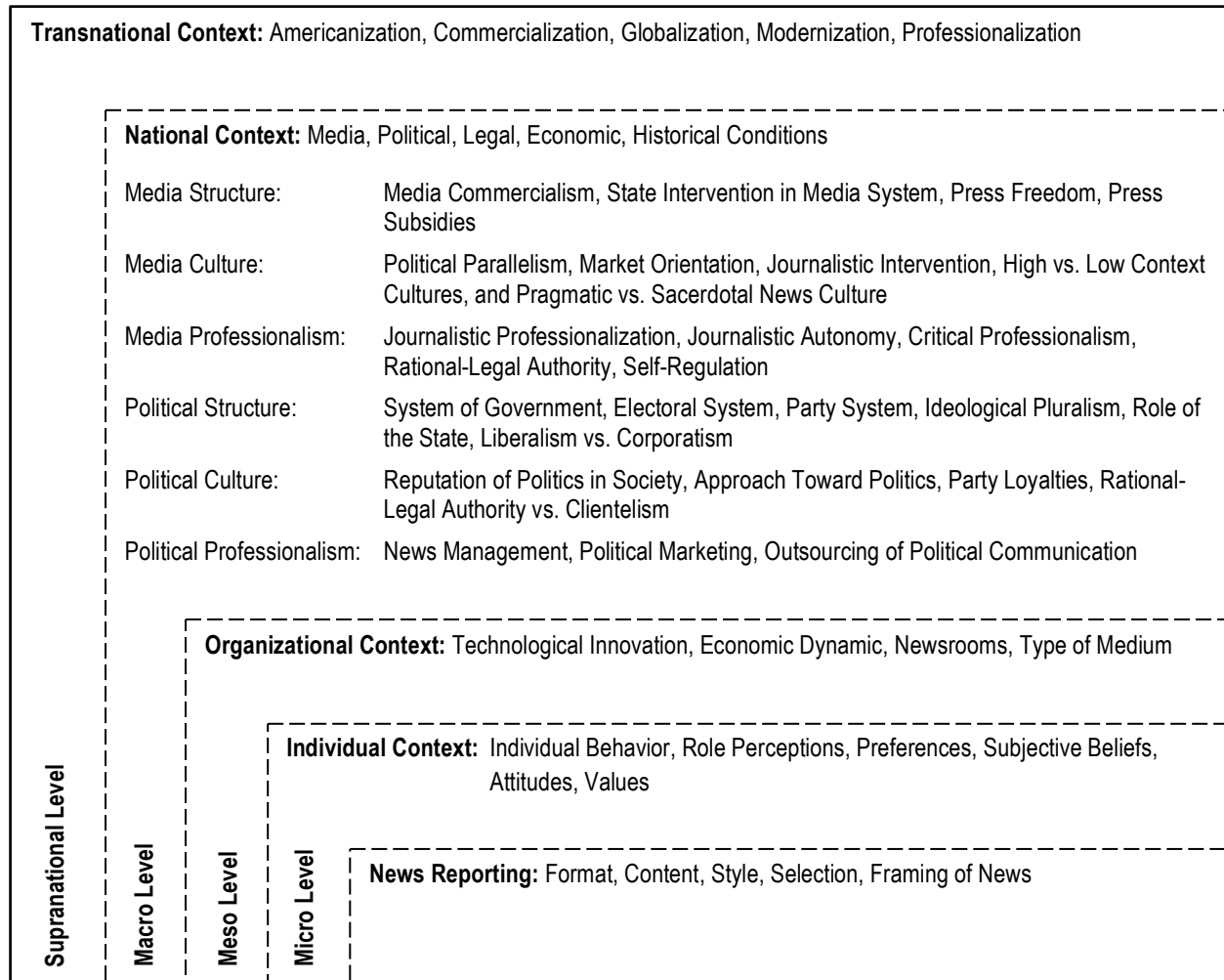
traditions of political journalism in affluent Western democracies: a) the Anglo-American tradition that was formative for the British and American press; b) the polarized Mediterranean tradition as established in Italy and France, for instance; and c) the Corporatist tradition that emerged in Scandinavian and Germanic countries. The three traditions are not addressed in depth here but are carefully described in the individual publications (e.g., *Publication I*, p. 990); however, it is important to note that these typologies served as the main guidelines for choosing the six Western democracies under investigation.

On the other hand, *similarities* in news reporting are theoretically explained by commercial dynamics and standardized technologies that work across systems and by over-time diffusion and imitation of norms and standards. Diffusion is often connected to the dissemination of the Anglo-American tradition of news reporting. “Professional” drivers of such diffusion processes are textbooks, training standards (objectivity, neutrality, sharp separation between facts and opinion), growing journalistic cynicism, critical expertise, and autonomy. “Commercial” drivers are marketability, deregulation, privatization and media concentration which were imported to Europe in the mid-1980s, and growing audience- and advertiser-orientation.

The historical-institutional pathways are theoretical ideal types drawn from the institutionalist literature on political systems and media systems. Previous research has not yet investigated in detail if these assumptions are reflected in *news content* or if they empirically fit observable real cases. In fact, there is a lack of content analyses that test these widely held assumptions in a comprehensive manner. This dissertation is making an important attempt to fill this research gap. Thus, it contributes to improving the weak theorizing in the field of comparative political communication research, which has not yet developed well-tested conceptual typologies (Norris, 2004, p. 122). This work examines the relevance of Hallin and Mancini’s characterizations of media systems for the news output produced by print media embedded in these systems. Across space, this work asks if the kinds of differences in news content can be found as predicted by the theoretical models and asks if the countries under investigation are classified adequately when *news content* is the dependent variable. Further, this dissertation includes a longitudinal dimension, which allows for testing of whether convergence can be found in times of globalization or whether press systems develop along national pathways, thereby mainly confirming the country groupings as predicted by the theoretical models.

This dissertation provides a comprehensive conceptual framework guided by a multilayered understanding of journalism to comparative communication research. During the last two decades, a number of scholars have categorized the influences on mass media content in a systematic order (e.g., Reese, 2007; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Donsbach (2010) argues that systemic features at the national level, organizational characteristics of media companies, and journalists' predispositions on the individual level have an impact on news selection. These influences can be found at the micro, meso and macro level and consist of individual routines and organizational and institutional context factors (Reese, 2007). Shoemaker and Reese (1996, p. 214) developed a "hierarchy of influences" model to examine news content. At the micro level of journalists, individual behaviors, preferences, subjective beliefs, attitudes, training, and role perceptions influence news content. At the meso level, the media's organizational goals, policies and norms shape the news production and their editorial practices and routines. All news organizations within one country are then subjected to the influences exerted by forces at the macro level of media systems and the broader political, economic, societal, cultural, legal, and historical conditions. These contextual conditions lead to either favorable or unfavorable opportunity structures for the evolution of specific transnational reporting trends, such as interpretative journalism. The historical-institutional context refers to deep-seated differences in structures and cultures, such as differentiation of the press from the political field. These differences symbolize barriers that hinder a homogenization of news practices and content. Finally, the supranational level includes transnational developments, such as globalization, modernization and commercialization processes. Needless to say, such an attempt to draw models of influences neither captures all of the complex interrelationships involved in the media nor presents a complete theoretical explanation for the production of news content (Reese, 2007, p. 31). Figure 2 shows a simplified theoretical framework, which allows for a detailed analysis of influences that might have an impact on news content.

Figure 2: Simplified Analytical Framework



Note: This Figure is based on the literature by Benson & Saguy, 2005; Blumler & Gurevitch, 1999; Donsbach, 2010; Esser 2010; Esser & Strömbäck, 2012; Gurevitch & Levy, 1990; Hahn et al., 2007; Hallin & Mancini, 2004a; Merrill, 2009; Reese, 2007; Shoemaker & Reese, 1996; Wiley, 2006.

The different levels in Figure 2 are to be understood as permeable sectors. Context factors can also change across time even though they are supposed to be relatively stable. Higher levels do not eliminate the influence of the lower level but set certain boundaries (Reese, 2007, p. 37). Esser (2010, p. 19) concluded that country-specific distinctions in news content could be elucidated with influential factors at the national level of media systems, whereas similarities can be described with the diffusion paradigm at the supranational level and with the overtime

assimilation processes of technological and economic conditions at the organizational level of the media. Scholars suggested that news content still differs markedly across countries because countries have distinct media cultures, media structures and degrees of professionalism that are shaped by the country's political and legal institutions. These factors inhibit a homogenization of reporting patterns (see Benson & Saguy, 2005; Esser & Strömbäck, 2012; Gurevitch & Levy, 1990; Merrill, 2009; Wiley, 2006). The next subchapter clarifies how this dissertation relates to the presented general comparative literature, why the comparative design was chosen, and how it was implemented.

2.1. Research Design

This dissertation is based on a large-scale newspaper content analysis (approximately 6,500 political news stories) that compares political news coverage in six countries (USA, GBR, GER, SWI, ITA, FRA) during routine periods from 1960 to 2007. The content analysis includes press systems from all three media system models by Hallin and Mancini (2004a) (Liberal, Democratic Corporatist, Polarized Pluralist). The choice of countries strengthens the quasi-experimental design, as it increases the variation in the type of media system and, thus, the generalization of the findings.

In each system, three outlets from different press sectors (national, regional, weekly) were analyzed. Although the sample is not representative of all news media in each country, these print outlets from three press sectors occupy similar positions of prestige and influence within their specific societies, making them suitable for a controlled comparative analysis. Interestingly, with the exception of Great Britain, all other press markets have historically been shaped more by regional than by tabloid newspapers. In France, Italy and the United States, tabloids of the British sort are close to non-existent, and Germany and Switzerland have each produced only one tabloid. Therefore, we chose to include regional instead of tabloid newspapers.

The comparative research perspective must disentangle national traditions and global influences and can account for the fact that journalistic practices and news organizations change over time. This dissertation focuses in routine phases of political affairs coverage from the 1960s, 1970s, 1990s and 2000s that are not bound to specific events or periods that would eventually bias the results. Large audiences, large international coverage and growing budgets

characterized journalism of the early 1960s, whereas the challenges of increased competitiveness, commercialization, globalization and digitalization are found in the 2000s (see Tunstall, 1996, 2008; for more information regarding the sample, see *Publication I*, pp. 994–996; *Publication II*, pp. 202–204; *Publication III*, pp. 235–236; *Publication IV*, pp. 7–8). Information on the methodological proceeding and data collection is discussed extensively in the four individual publications and will not be elaborated here.

In addition to formal variables such as article size, location and length, the codebook contained 35 content-related variables based on the existing literature (this dissertation presents only a small portion of the variables). All individual papers of this cumulative thesis are hypothesis-driven (they clearly spell out hypotheses in detail), and the publications mainly rely on descriptive statistics and explorative grouping techniques such as correspondence analysis.

Scholars in the field have emphasized the need to combine spatial with temporal comparisons, particularly when examining political communication systems (see Esser, 2013b; Nielsen, Esser & Levy, 2013; Pfetsch & Esser, 2012). It is here that this dissertation positions itself and where it provides an important contribution to our understanding of the factors shaping newspaper content and how they change over time. In the individual publications, the general assumptions about political newsmaking outlined above are broken down into more precise hypotheses that are tailored to the specific angle that the respective publication takes and the specific data it uses.

3. Individual Publications and Results

This dissertation is composed of four individual publications, each of which contribute to answering the overall underlying research questions raised in this synthesis. Present-day studies in international comparative research have become very complex, even more so when temporal comparisons are included. Therefore, *Publication I* is based on a high level of data aggregation, providing first insights into the overall study's empirical data, while the succeeding publications go into detail with analyses at less aggregated levels. Table 1 offers a helpful overview of the theoretical approaches, indicators, news outlets and years included in the individual publications as well as their main objectives and shortcomings.

Table 1: Overview of Individual Publications of Cumulative Thesis

Published In	Theoretical Approach	Indicators	News Outlets Included	Years Included	Main Objectives	Shortcomings, Research Gaps
Publication No. I: <i>Journalism</i> (peer-reviewed journal)	New Institutionalism Journalism Models	Opinion-Oriented	National Newspapers	1960/61	First Insights into Cross-National Analysis of News Reporting: Revise and Expand Former Models of Journalism	Longitudinal Content Analysis of Public Affairs Coverage
		Objectivity	Regional Newspapers	1972/73		
		Negativity	News Weeklies	1994/95		
			* aggregated at system level	2006/07		
Publication No. II: <i>Political Journalism in Transition</i> (edited book by R. Kuhn & R. K. Nielsen)	Comparative Approach Journalism in Transition Standardization	Opinion-Oriented	National Newspapers	1960/61	Cross-National and Longitudinal Analysis of News Reporting	Specification (Definition, Operationalization and Analysis) of <i>Professional</i> Imperatives of News Reporting
		Objectivity	Regional Newspapers	2006/07		
		Negativity	News Weeklies			
		News Sources Topics	* aggregated at system level			
Publication No. III: <i>Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly</i> (peer-reviewed journal)	Hard News Paradigm Americanization Europeanization Hybridization	Objectivity	National Newspapers	1960/61	Cross-National and Longitudinal Analysis of <i>Professional</i> Reporting Standards	Specification of <i>Commercial</i> Imperatives of News Reporting: Analysis of News-Making at Organizational-Level
		Authenticity	Regional Newspapers	2006/07		
		Transparency	* aggregated at system level			
		Interpretation Topics				
Publication No. IV: <i>Journalism Studies</i> (peer-reviewed journal)	Popularization Commercialization Professional Autonomy Communication Culture Convergence	Sensationalism	National Newspapers	1960/61	Longitudinal Analysis of <i>Commercial</i> Reporting Standards at System- and Organizational-Level	Explanatory Approach, Hypotheses-Testing, Causal Analysis of News Reporting (e.g., with QCA)
		Scandalization	Regional Newspapers	1972/73		
		Emotionalization	News Weeklies	1994/95		
		Personal Narrative Privatization	* aggregated at system and organizational level	2006/07		

3.1. Publication I: Competing Models of Journalism

The first publication by Esser and Umbricht (2013) titled “*Competing Models of Journalism? Political Affairs Coverage in U.S., British, German, Swiss, French and Italian Newspapers*” highlights cross-national differences in political news journalism and, due to space constraints, refrains from considering temporal changes. It asks whether theoretical models of journalism in media system research established by colleagues in the field (Hallin & Mancini, 2004a) can be proved when looking at *news content*.

The study focuses on *Research Questions 1* and *4* and examines how Western news cultures can be categorized into existing conceptual typologies of media systems with regard to the following three theoretically grounded indicators: *objective reporting*, *interpretative reporting*, and *opinionated reporting*. A correspondence analysis pictures the cross-national similarities and dissimilarities on a visual map. The attempt to visualize reporting styles found evidence in support of Hallin and Mancini’s (2004a) models. The publication reveals three approaches to newsmaking: 1) a U.S.-led model of ‘rational news analysis’ (coexistence of objective and interpretative journalism), favoring critical yet fact-based interpretation of political affairs; 2) an Italian-led model of polarized, negative, conflict-oriented and opinionated reporting (coexistence of opinionated and negative news); and 3) a Germanic model of disseminating news with views, although with an emphasis on rational, factual and consensual reporting (coexistence of news and opinion). In addition, the analysis supports Hallin and Mancini’s theoretical assumption that French and British newspapers occupy borderline positions. However, it also finds an opportunity for further development of the models because the ideal of Anglo-American journalism as a cohesive benchmark as established by Chalaby (1996) turned out to be of limited value. The correspondence analysis shows that the internal consistency of the Anglo-American model is lower than the theoretical ideal allows us to expect. The proximity of the British to the Corporatist-Germanic newspapers can be explained by a greater appreciation of the dual dissemination of “news and views” in their day-to-day coverage of politics. In sum, the publication contributes to the comparative communication research, as it merges a historically informed intuitionist approach with systematic content analysis and revises the assumption about the affiliation of individual systems to certain models.

The last column in Table 1 illuminates that this publication has one major shortcoming: the absence of longitudinal analysis. This temporal assessment is addressed in *Publication II*.

3.2. Publication II: Changing Political News

The second publication by Umbricht and Esser (2013) titled “*Changing Political News? Long-Term Trends in American, British, French, Italian, German and Swiss Press Reporting*” adds a temporal perspective to the aforementioned mapping exercise of discursive, content-based models. It is linked to the first publication in that it investigates similar theoretical dimensions. Additional factors introduced include the indicators of *news sources* and *topics*, more fine-grained analyses, and discussions of *Research Questions 2* and *3* about temporal changes and the convergence thesis. The study systematically examines whether the political affairs coverage produced by the press in six Western media systems have retained their characteristic differences over time or whether the content has become more similar. It derives hypotheses from the three ideal typical theoretical media system models by Hallin and Mancini (2004a), which showed their distinct contours most clearly in the 1960s and 1970s, and relates them directly to measurable characteristics of news content. The study examines whether the historical and structural differences behind the models are reflected in political news coverage, and whether there is a blurring of reporting styles over time (convergence thesis) due to globalization (global interconnectedness), commercialization (audience response), and journalistic professionalization (diffusion of critical professionalism, recognition of norms, imitation of reporting techniques).

While the publication finds clear cross-national convergence in the preference for opinion-orientated stories in covering politics, it also finds persistent divergence in the use of objectivity-related and negativity-related reporting that continues to differentiate the models. First and with regard to *opinion-orientation*, the emerging convergence tendency of Western newspapers to devote approximately one-quarter of their political stories to opinionated journalism may be explained by a gradual blending of European influences (with a high appreciation for commentary) and American influences (with a growing appreciation for interpretation). Second, *negativity* is highest in systems marked by high levels of political polarization (ITA, FRA) and/or high levels of media commercialization (USA, GBR). Third, as hypothesized, *objectivity* is most prevalent in U.S. newspapers and least prevalent in polarized pluralist systems. The longitudinal analysis shows that British newspapers absorb more and more polarized elements in their day-to-day coverage of politics. Objectivity originated as a reporting convention in the U.S. and is gradually separating U.S. and British newsmaking “making the myth of a coherent Anglo-American ideal less and less sustainable” (Umbricht & Esser, 2013, p.

214). The U.S., however, stands out as the press system that values opinion the least and the use of sources and other objectivity-related story elements the most.

The publication concludes that political reporting practices cannot be integrated into existing media systems typologies without contradiction. Nevertheless, it confirms several expectations derived from the work by Hallin and Mancini, including their suspicion that France and Britain are borderline cases (see also *Publication I*). While both the liberal and the polarized pluralist systems lose internal consistency over time, the analysis reveals a remarkable resemblance and stability of reporting patterns at German and Swiss newspapers.³ Further analyses are needed to draw new groupings of press systems with regard to the *use of sources* in public discourse, where the patterns found here are only partly reconcilable with the theoretical expectations. Similar technological and economic developments around the globe and increasing transnational exchanges between the national models have not led to an overall homogenization of news practices, which further underlines the relevance of comparative research.

The next two publications analyze the professional and commercial criteria of newsmaking, a differentiation that is neglected in the first two publications (see also Table 1). *Publication III* is dedicated to the “professional imperatives” of newsmaking (see Figure 1) and focuses on the hard news paradigm.

3.3. Publication III: The Evolution of Objective and Interpretive Journalism

The third publication by Esser and Umbrecht “*The Evolution of Objective and Interpretive Journalism in the Western Press. Comparing Six News Systems since the 1960s*” primarily addresses the *professional* imperatives of newsmaking and traces how the *hard news paradigm* as an ideal has been implemented, modified and expanded over time in Western press systems. The news paradigm refers to fact-oriented and evidence-based news reporting and is operationalized as consisting of reporting conventions in the pursuit of facticity, balance, transparency and authenticity. The publication traces how the paradigm diffused differently depending on external contextual conditions, such as longtime press freedom, liberal democracy, a substantial newspaper market with strong demand, and openness toward Anglo-American press

³ For reasons of simplicity, the term “Swiss” is used throughout this dissertation instead of “Swiss-German”. This term is not entirely accurate, as the news outlets analyzed for Switzerland are limited to the German-speaking region of Switzerland. Therefore, the terms “Swiss newspapers” and “Swiss journalists” introduced in this volume only pertain to “Swiss-German” newspapers and journalists.

principles. Further, it examines how the news paradigm expanded with the components of *interpretative analysis* (reflecting U.S.-style critical scrutiny) and *expression of opinion* (reflecting European-style advocacy). The expansion of the hard-news paradigm is mirrored in the growing popularity of story genres that allow journalists to include opinion (commentaries or stories mixing information with opinion) and interpretation (stories mixing information and interpretation) in political affairs coverage but is also redefining classical pure news items that are becoming more analytical in their discursive composition. It shows how pure news items have been increasingly geared toward analysis (answering why-questions) and contextualization of political events (addressing causes and consequences of occurrences and showing connections to other events).

A trend toward more interpretative content seems justifiable and may even contribute to an informed citizenry and enriched public sphere if it provides deeper meaning and explanation of political substance and issues (“policy”), but it seems more disputable if it focuses merely on politicians’ strategies and tactical maneuvers (“process”). However, the cross-temporal analysis has shown that “process”-centered interpretation is on the rise in all six press systems at the expense of “policy”-related interpretation, a trend that warrants future attention.

In line with the two previous publications, the findings have led to the formation of three distinct news cultures: 1) a U.S.-style of interpretative journalism that relies heavily on experts, direct quotations, and considerations of pros-and-cons; what distinguishes American from continental European journalism is its distance from commentaries; 2) an Italian style that is furthest removed from the principles of facticity and balance and which can be considered a prototype for mixing interpretation with opinion; the Italian press system also applies more of an interpretative news style to covering “process” than “policy”; 3) a third approach to implementing the news paradigm is found in the Corporatist-Germanic systems (GER, SWI), which are known for a characteristic coexistence of commentary and objectivity.

Despite growing trans-border diffusion and interconnectivity, newspapers in the six systems have not become more similar in their use of facticity-related news practices (measured by an increasing standard deviation indicating greater cross-national variation). However, the differences for “commentaries” and “items mixing information and opinion” decreased in all systems, thereby becoming more homogenous.

In sum, the publication contributes to a more nuanced understanding of news cultures and finds evidence for a gradual transformation of objectivity toward a more interpretative approach.

It confirms “hybrid” forms of journalism in which old (tradition-bound) and new (border-transgressing) elements were freely mixed. U.S.-led reporting conventions in pursuit of facticity, balance and critical professionalism have spread to European systems. However, American newspapers have slowly moved along a more opinion-oriented trajectory that is more in line with the European tradition. All six Western news systems have experienced a shift from journalists as observers to more autonomous interpreters of politics. Levels of education, the status of the profession, and changes in market dynamics may have contributed to this development.

Publications IV takes a closer look at these market changes and is devoted to the “commercial reporting standards” (see Figure 1). The publication *not only* illuminates the differences and similarities at the system level – a shortcoming of the first three publications – but also offers, as specified in Table 1, a cross-organizational analysis. The publication provides a more nuanced picture of long-term transformations of news and their characteristic correspondence to contextual conditions.

3.4. Publication IV: The Push to Popularize Politics

The fourth manuscript by Umbricht and Esser, “*The Push to Popularize Politics: Understanding the Audience-Friendly Packaging of Political News in Six Press Systems since the 1960s*”, tackles the *commercial* imperatives of news reporting. It offers a five-item based measurement of popularization of news, combining *sensationalism*, *scandalization*, *emotionalization*, *common people narrative* and *privatization of public figures*. A core assumption in comparative journalism research holds that the increasing commercialization and globalization of the news industry encourage transnational standardization processes in the framing of news stories across different press systems toward newspapers with a catchall audience (see Aalberg, van Aelst & Curran, 2010; Curran et al., 2009). Hallin and Mancini (2004a, pp. 277–279) consider that a greater audience orientation has implications on newspapers in that news content will be streamlined toward more popularized presentation standards and that reporting patterns become more homogenous. It is argued that news organizations are tempted to imitate profitable reporting techniques seen in other countries because they are faced with similar challenges, such as declining circulation, sudden rise of free dailies, loss of advertising to the Internet, growing competition from new communication channels and oversaturated consumers. Growing co-orientation within the global news arena as well as economic liberalization and political deregulation are assumed to contribute further to a standardization of news practices. However,

there is little conclusive evidence available that supports a converging trend toward market-driven journalism (see Brants, 2007, p. 108); this publication remedies this shortcoming. It outlines five presumed conditions that either promote or inhibit such an entertainment-centered reporting style: commercialism, tabloid tradition, communication culture, professional autonomy, and type of medium.

Cross-nationally, the study shows that *sensationalism* is used most frequently in Italian and French newspapers whereas it is least frequently used in German and Swiss newspapers. British and American newspapers occupy “only” a medium position regarding the sensationalist approach to newsmaking, even though they have a less regulated and more market- and advertiser-dependent press system, a much longer tradition of tabloid journalism and competition with television, and higher degrees of journalistic autonomy. With regard to the use of *scandalization* and *emotionalization* techniques, a high tendency exists also in French and Italian newspapers to make their political reporting more audience-friendly. British as well as American newspapers have reached the same tendency since the 1970s and now display the highest proportion of scandalized and emotionalized news items. However, these findings for the French and Italian newspapers portend that commentary-journalism and their expressive communication culture (linked to a more aesthetic, associative and sometimes spectacular reporting style) has a stronger influence on news content than is often expected (see Hahn et al., 2007; Hall & Hall, 1990; Schroeder, 1994). The tendency to *privatize public figures* and to portray political news from a *common people perspective* is especially prevalent in British and American newspapers. It is however also obvious that French newspapers have been following these trends strongly since the 1990s. This publication reveals that the use of *emotionalization*, *common people narrative* and *privatization* over the entire period is used most often by British and American newspapers, and that *sensationalism* and *scandalization* are used most often by French and Italian newspapers. The overall use of popularization techniques (aggregated into a “Popularization Index”) tends to be lowest in Germany and Switzerland, and the gap to the other countries has even widened recently.

Cross-temporally, the analysis has shown that the five presentation patterns have increased in most news systems short of Germany. The most significant increases took place during the 1960s and 1970s. Regarding the convergence thesis, the differences between the six press systems under study have not decreased systematically over time with respect to all five popularization strategies. The Corporatist-Germanic news systems are more resistant to tabloid

trends and their popularization indices generally rank lowest. Germany and Switzerland have newspaper-centric systems, and their newspapers can rely on high long-term subscription rates and are thus less dependent on daily newsstand sales. Other reasons for particularly low uses of scandalization in Corporatist-Germanic systems may be a weaker adversarial journalism culture, stronger corporatism and consensus politics. The Corporatist countries' unique institutional arrangements apparently suppress popularization effects to a certain degree, which in turn undermines convergence trends. Although the five popularization indicators increase most in the Anglo-American countries, the findings presented here reveal that "commercialization" is not the explanation for everything. While this study relates the intensive use of some of the five popularization techniques in the Anglophone markets with social acceptance for popular culture, a high degree of journalistic autonomy and commercialism, it relates the intensive use of some other of the five techniques in France and Italy to the social acceptance for spectacularization in media discourse, polarized political discourse and accusations of nepotism. The link to the long-established systemic features, which prevent a transnational homogenization of political news, underlines the importance of the path dependency and stresses the continuing relevance of context-based comparative research.

Cross-organizationally, the use of popularization techniques is lowest in the more serious-minded national newspapers and highest in the more colorful, interpretative and less time-pressed weekly newspapers. As expected, the use of popularization techniques increased in all press sectors since the 1960s, but regional papers that normally have less financial resources at their disposal are, in particular, susceptible to blending political news with popularization elements. This is expressed by a permanent upsurge in the practice of all five content-based popularization variables. Finally, the internal homogeneity of newspaper outlets located in the same country must not be overestimated. While daily newspapers continue to represent mostly *country-specific* news cultures, weeklies increasingly use their own style, which is increasingly shaped by the *genre-specific* requirements of a magazine-type journalism.

4. Concluding Discussion and Outlook

This dissertation contributes to the comparative communication research in several ways. So far, the comparative literature has been influenced by conceptions of journalism that have arisen from self-declarations of journalists through surveys or from conceptions of media systems that focus on structure but not on *content*. The findings presented here rest upon a study of manifest news content reflecting actual production practices. Based on rich data sources, this dissertation fills a substantial gap in the research literature and helps validate and improve existing typologies in important ways.

4.1. Main Conclusions

This dissertation investigates how context, time and newspaper type influence the political newsmaking in Western democracies in symptomatic ways. From a cross-national, cross-organizational and cross-temporal standpoint, this dissertation concludes that the effects of commercialization and professionalization on news content are more widespread today than in the past but have developed differently across news systems, time and newspaper types.

The longitudinal research design allows for analysis of transnational processes of change and answers *Research Question 2*. From a *cross-temporal* perspective, the findings show signs of rising “commercial” and “professional” aspects of news reporting. This dissertation provides empirical evidence for an increase in highlighting the negative, sensationalist and emotional facets of the news, hunting scandals, privileging the standpoints of common people, and emphasizing the private lives of politicians to attract large readerships. To be exact, this transformation toward a more “commercial” approach to newsmaking and thus a more “popular style” is less distinct in the Swiss newspapers and does not occur in German news items, at least not with the measures used in this study. Journalists from the Corporatist-Germanic systems use these standards at a generally lower level than do journalists from the other systems. British and American news organizations, in particular, seem to be more vulnerable to the impact of the commercial imperatives of newsmaking, as their levels of popularization in the news increase the most. What is surprising, though, is the intensity with which these popularization-related practices grew in the British newspapers. This shift toward a more entertainment-oriented approach to news reporting raises legitimate democratic concerns when considering that it has been argued that these developments lead to public cynicism and political apathy. In addition,

this dissertation shows increasing characteristics of a more “professional” kind of newsmaking that refers to the journalists’ aspirations to preserve their independence from political manipulation. The profession of journalism is undergoing a profound transformation in that interpretative journalism has largely supplanted descriptive reporting. This leads to more *contextualization* and *why-reporting* and even to the European-led convention in pursuit of *commentary* on political events. In the 2000s, most news organizations published fewer pure-news articles and more analysis- and opinion-based pieces than in the 1960s. At the same time, the diffusion of the professional ideal of *objectivity* is making headway throughout Western press systems (with the exceptions of Italy and Britain). Thus, while one could speak of the “Americanization” of European news coverage in terms of the importance of objectivity, there is also a “Europeanization” of U.S. coverage taking place with respect to the role of analysis in political coverage (two-way influences).

The *cross-national* research design of this dissertation allows to answer *Research Question 1*. The presented results show that countries were predominantly aligned in the 1960s to the predictions of the three Hallin and Mancini media system models. Most expectations and hypotheses raised in this dissertation are confirmed, offering valuable knowledge for the international comparative journalism research. The summary of the study proves that the historical-institutional pathways are continuously relevant with regard to news content and indicates essential differences in news reporting across the six countries under investigation. In line with expectations, the study finds a high degree of *opinionated* coverage in French and Italian newspapers and a low degree in American news items. Throughout the past decades, a process of convergence has taken place in terms of how much opinionated coverage is offered to readers. As expected, the study finds U.S. news reports to be the most *objective*, French and Italian news reports to be the least so, and the Corporatist-Germanic model to take a middle position. The British press is a noteworthy outlier. Already in the 1960s, it made less use of *objectivity-related* story elements than anticipated. Even at the end of the study period, the British reporting style is closer to that of some Mediterranean newspapers than to U.S. newspapers. As anticipated, the level of *negativity*, *sensationalism*, *scandalization*, *emotionalization*, *common people narrative*, and *privatization* are generally lower in Swiss and German news reports. News organizations in Corporatist-Germanic countries are mostly embedded in consensus democracies with moderate polarization that rely on compromise and negotiations for political decision-making. In addition, the press markets of Switzerland and

Germany are not very commercialized, the social acceptance for popular culture are not very high, and journalistic cultures are not very adversarial. American and British newspapers were anticipated to be most *negative*, *scandalized*, *sensationalist* and *emotional* in their reporting and most oriented toward the *common people narrative* and the *privatization of politicians*, because of a stronger market-orientation, the need for dramatic storytelling, a higher appreciation of popular culture, and a long watchdog history. However, the patterns found here are only partly reconcilable with the theoretical expectations, as the American and British newspapers take only a middle position in the use of *negativity* and *sensationalism*. The fact that the press in the Mediterranean media systems is often involved in polarized battles among fragmented parties, that they are characterized by deep cleavages, sharply opposed ideologies and open political conflicts, and that their social acceptance for spectacularization in the media discourse helps explain these findings.

When integrating the various results of the four individual publications of this cumulative thesis to draw broader conclusions about the underlying news cultures, three present-day approaches to newsmaking emerge (see Table 2). As expected by the theoretical discussions of the models, the “American prototype” of newspapers favors highly objective yet critical analyses, integrates a large amount of sources and is balanced. U.S. journalism represents a preference for mixing information with interpretation. The U.S. style of interpretative journalism relies heavily on experts, direct quotations, and considerations of pros-and-cons. What distinguishes American from continental European journalism is its distance from commentaries and other forms of opinion expression on the news pages, which was true in the 1960s and continues to be true in the 2000s; however, while opinionated news was nearly entirely absent in the 1960s, it gained in importance over time. In addition, the American prototype of newspapers relates more than any other prototype to the popularization techniques of emotionalization, common people narrative, and privatization of public figures.

In contrast, the “Italian prototype” of newspapers centers on opinion-orientation, integrates highly negative, conflict-focused, sensationalist and scandalized information with much lower levels of objectivity (i.e., facticity and balance), and shows the highest preference for political elite sources, which supports most of the expectations. The Italian prototype has remained unique with respect to its use of interpretative and opinionated news and uses negative news to similar degrees as do the American and British systems.

A third approach to newsmaking is found in the reporting style of the Swiss and German newspapers. The “Corporatist-Germanic prototype” of newsmaking has become Americanized in the use of objective news but remains hesitant in adopting an overly negative, sensationalist, scandalized, emotional and privatized stance toward politics. As anticipated, the journalists in the Corporatist systems are far less negative or critical and follow the objectivity ideal at a respectable level. The Corporatist systems are known for their characteristic coexistence of objectivity and commentary. Swiss and German journalists seem to have attentively adopted many of the facticity-related principles of the hard-news paradigm but also display an aversion to direct quotes from sources and common people narratives. Instead, they themselves prefer to take the lead in their stories, thereby opening the door to opinion. In fact, the Swiss and German newspapers show great similarity in their reporting patterns and the journalists seem to have increasingly come to a similar understanding of newsmaking.

Table 2: Empirical Prototypes of Newsmaking in 2006/07

	American Prototype	Italian Prototype	Corporatist-Germanic Prototype
Objectivity	high	low	moderate
Opinion-Orientation	low	high	moderate
Scandalization	high	high	low
Negativity	moderate	high	low
Sensationalism	moderate	high	low
Emotionalization	high	moderate	low
Common People Narrative	high	low	low
Privatization	high	low	low

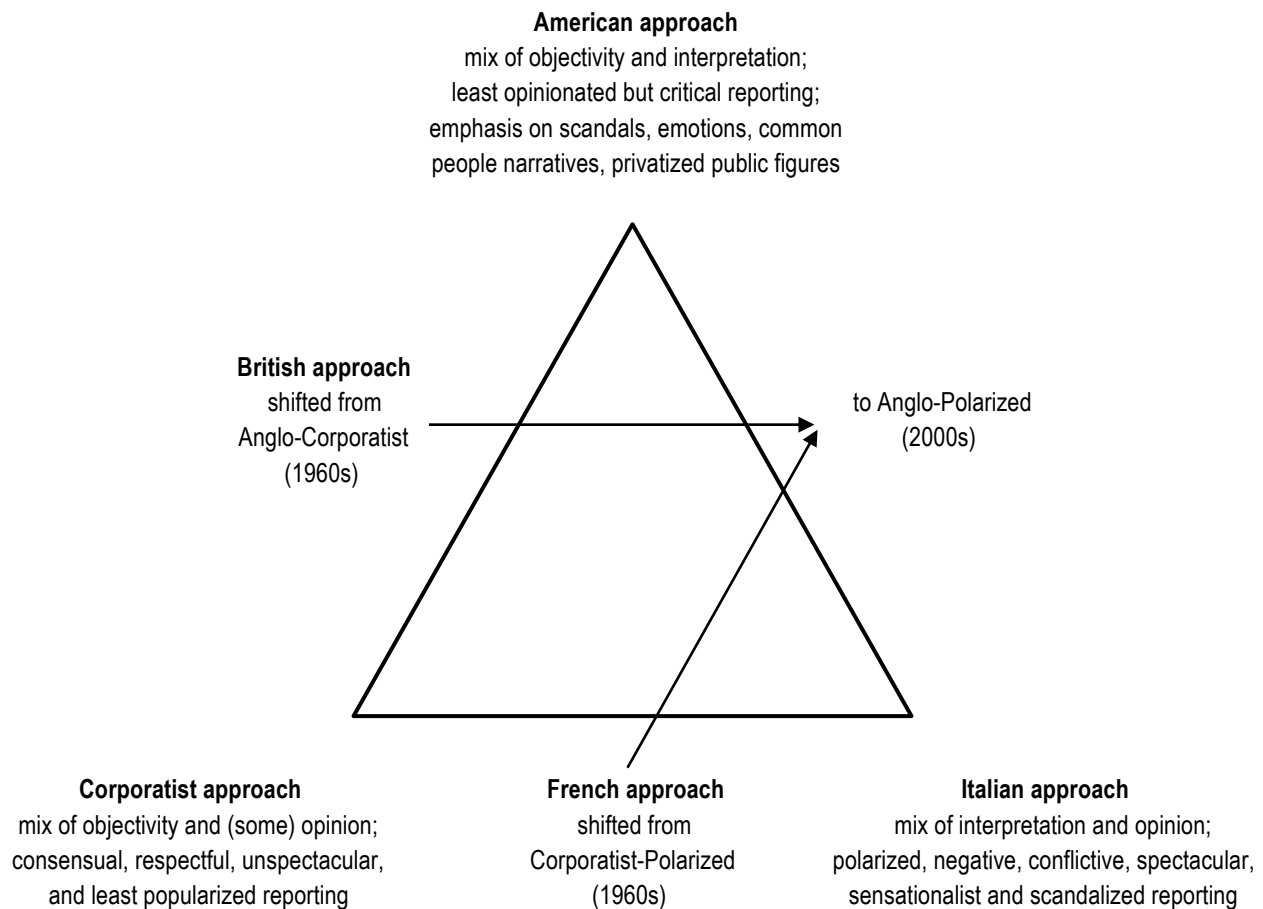
This dissertation also confirms the assumption derived from the work from Hallin and Mancini that France and Great Britain are borderline cases of their respective models. These two noteworthy cases seem more difficult to properly classify into existing media models (see *Research Question 4*). The French newspapers have sharply reduced their preference for opinionated journalism, whereas British newspapers have given opinionated journalism even

more space. Today, British political affairs coverage seems more in line with the reporting styles of the Italian press system than with the U.S. press system. British journalism was placed between Corporatist-Germanic and American styles in the 1960s and then moved to a middle position between the American and Italian styles in the 2000s. Commentaries, negativity, scandalization, sensationalism, emotionalization, common people narrative and privatization dramatically increased in the British press. As pointed out by this dissertation, the first four of these reporting criteria are typical characteristics of Italian newspapers. The British press was more consistent with the Corporatist-Germanic model in the 1960s and has taken on several features of the Mediterranean model over time. The findings reveal that the Anglo-American tradition as “the” reference model is not a cohesive benchmark when discussing news content. The Anglo-American ideal has turned out to be a category of, at most, historical value, which seems less and less sustainable. Britain differentiates itself from the U.S. in its lower degrees of objectivity in the news, its greater emphasis on opinionated news stories and its much higher *growth* in the use of negativity, scandalization, privatization and the common people narrative. However, in 2006/07 British and American newspapers are closely aligned in regard to commercially initiated popularization techniques. Finally, French journalism was located between the Italian and Corporatists style in the 1960s. France and Italy share a highly negative, sensationalist and scandalized communication culture. However, French newspapers increasingly distinguish themselves from the Polarized Pluralist prototype of press systems in their greater respect for the objectivity norm, decreasing opinion-orientation and sharply declining focus on political elite sources. A recent trend points to a particular shift of French newspapers toward the American prototype of newsmaking with respect to the growing emphasis on emotionalization, increasing use of individual sources, the common people narrative and the privatization of public figures to make topics more accessible for readers. This trend makes a proper classification of French newsmaking even more difficult.

Hallin and Mancini have recognized that their own typology may benefit from adding an empirical content analysis component, and I am optimistic that the revised typology resulting from this dissertation contributes to a more nuanced understanding of journalistic news cultures in comparative perspective (see Figure 3). It follows from these analyses that the three major reporting styles of the 1960s through the 2000s (American, Italian, Corporatist) could be described as a triangle that stayed fairly stable (with the two exceptions of the British transition from an Anglo-Corporatist to an Anglo-Polarized style, and the French transition from a

Corporatist-Polarized to an Anglo-Polarized style). However, that triangle shifted in its entirety toward interpretive journalism (an increase in answering why-questions, addressing causes and consequences of occurrences, showing connections to other events, and relying on process-related topics) and somewhat more toward popularized public affairs (highlighting the sensationalist and emotional facets of the news, hunting scandals, privileging the viewpoints of common people, and emphasizing the private lives of politicians) as the decades passed.

Figure 3: Empirical Patterns of Newsmaking and Underlying News Cultures



The *cross-organizational* research design of this dissertation offers empirical evidence for differences across newspaper types (see *Publication IV*). The use of popularization-related practices such as sensationalism, emotionalization, scandalization, common people narrative, and privatization is lowest in the prestigious national press and highest in the more colorful,

interpretative, impact-oriented and less time-pressed weeklies. The use of popularization techniques increased in all press sectors as from the 1960s. However, regional newspapers that normally face much tougher choices given their smaller budgets and mid-market positions are particularly forced to comply with commercial pressures and are susceptible to blending political news with popularization elements; this trend is seen by a steady upsurge in the use of practices related to the popularization of political news. This dissertation is also able to show that daily newspapers continue to represent in a relatively reliable way mostly country-specific news cultures, whereas weeklies increasingly use their own style, which is gradually shaped by the genre-specific requirements of a magazine-type journalism. Based on these results, this dissertation concludes that national borders still play a significant role, but not equally so for all newspaper types.

One also could conclude that professionalization and commercialization tendencies exist, albeit in different forms and degrees in different news systems and newspaper types. I do not assume that these tendencies are per se problematic for society. A growing contextualization and profound interpretation of complex issues may indeed help the average citizen to gain a better understanding of politics. On a less positive note, the findings also reveal that “process”-centered interpretation that highlights politicians’ strategic maneuvers is gaining ground relative to “policy”-centered public affairs coverage. This transformation combined with a more entertainment-oriented approach to newsmaking raises legitimate democratic concerns when considering that it has been argued that these developments lead to public cynicism and political apathy. Nevertheless, we should refrain from jumping to the conclusion that “everything” (i.e., the public affairs coverage) is getting worse and is jeopardizing the democratic public sphere. Future research should therefore address these consequences in newspapers. Content analyses must be linked to surveys and experiments to figure out the effects of commercialized and professionalized news content on citizens’ behaviors and attitudes. This dissertation contributes by adding some pieces to the puzzle, and a more complete and, therefore, convincing picture emerges from the sum of all scientific contributions (e.g., in the context of the *NCCR Democracy*).

Regarding the validity of the widely spread assumption of *convergence* at the country level, the findings prove minimal support (see *Research Question 3*). Despite the global forces within national media systems, political news coverage is still mainly shaped by a national policy agenda and a national political culture. Although the study finds transnational news logics in

Western press systems (e.g., increasing *interpretation* and *objectivity*; increasing integration of *individual sources* into news stories), the differences between the models have not dissolved across the board. The differences between the countries have decreased only with respect to *opinion-orientation* in covering politics, but the use of *objectivity*-, *negativity*-, *emotion*- and *personal narrative*-related reporting features continues to differentiate journalism models more or less according to the theoretical expectations. This is to say that different media logics (commercial and professional) are neither traveling unidirectionally across borders (Americanization) nor are they adopted in identical ways (convergence), but they are used in differing forms and intensities according to contextual conditions such as level of commercialism, dependency on advertising and sales, length of tabloid tradition, social acceptance for popular culture, level of journalistic autonomy, history of watchdog journalism, type of communication cultures, social appreciation for spectacularization in the media discourse, degree of ideological polarization, level of clientelism, or newspaper type. Fairly stable tradition-bound differences in political news reporting prevent a universal homogenization of reporting patterns. For instance, German and Swiss journalists are less guided by commercial aspects of media logic and resist the intense use of *negative* and *popularized* news. At the same time, however, British and American newspapers seem to be forced to adapt to market pressures, as their levels of popularization-oriented news items increase the most.

In sum, political reporting practices cannot easily be integrated without contradiction into existing media system typologies. System differences do not always coincide with differences in news content. This is to say that new journalistic features are not adopted one-by-one but are shaped and adjusted by local customs and deep-rooted traditions that function as favorable or unfavorable opportunity structures. Hence, empirical approaches to newsmaking become more layered, multi-faceted and complex. These hybrid reporting styles suggest a fusion of country-specific reporting patterns with elements of a transnational news logic. Although journalism may be confronted with similar technological and economic changes around the world, there is no general trend toward homogenization of journalism, at least not in the press. Few transnational actors have emerged in the press sector, and there is no workable commercial business model for truly “global” journalism that offers one single global vision of the world. What we do see, particularly in newsrooms in globalized metropolises such as New York, London, Paris and others, are global and domestic influences that come together, creating blended news cultures

that mix transnational and national aspects. In short, the national context still matters for journalistic values and practices, particularly in this age of increased global news flows.

4.2. Limitations

This dissertation is not without limitations. Future studies and comparative political content analyses should therefore tackle the following points.

- *Explanatory approach:* This dissertation has conducted explorative procedures, and the discussion of possible relationships between contextual conditions and the findings are not based on a strict causal design. Future research should elaborate on explanatory conclusions of causality and connect news content to the macro data of the media structure (i.e., degree of media competition, degree of press concentration, circulation figures, advertising revenues, and advertising spending as a percentage of gross domestic product). Based on such structural data, more sophisticated statistical analyses can be conducted. One possible avenue for future research is explanatory procedures such as *Qualitative Content Analysis* when analyzing news content to answer the question “what are the conditions for variations over time and across systems”. This dissertation serves as a starting point and further analyses can build on the lessons learned here to causally explain variations in news logic.
- *Use of multiple research methods:* The finding presented here that various news systems have shifted from the journalist as observer to a more autonomous interpreter of complex problems is consistent with the outcomes from surveys of U.S. journalists who argue that the interpretative role has become more important since the early 1980s (see Beam, Weaver & Brownlee, 2008; Brownlee & Beam, 2012). This congruence of survey and content analysis findings is more convincing than the evidence from either separately and reinforces this dissertation’s findings. Combining more than one methodological approach (whether qualitative or quantitative) for gathering data and investigating a research question provides a more complete set of findings and should therefore be striven for in future analyses. Such a procedure allows more substantiated claims about the relation between the views of political journalists and news content and answers the call for more studies that link journalists’ attitudes and values to the content they produce (e.g., see van Dalen, 2011; Vos, 2002).

- *Expansion of the study's scope:* a) *Spatial Expansion:* Another limitation of this dissertation is the geographical restriction to Western news systems (all established democracies with stable political culture and free market economies). It would be desirable to extend this Western-centered focus to other parts of the world to prevent faulty generalizations. However, the availability of coding material from the 1960s will be a challenging task in many countries. b) *Expansion of news outlets:* This dissertation has analyzed three press titles per country, which represent a substantial portion of their respective systems. Nonetheless, no three papers can represent an entire press system, and future research is encouraged to consider replicating this study with more newspapers. Further, it would be interesting to ask the same questions as the ones raised in this dissertation with respect to news on TV, Internet, and radio to examine whether some media types are more susceptible to producing commercialized news content than others. However, it seems almost impossible to conduct a similar content analysis of TV, Internet or radio news over five decades given the dismal situation of TV and radio archives in Europe or the non-existence of the Internet in the earlier sample periods. Yet, with evermore citizens turning to the Web, a core question is how the evolution of new online media and mobile communication with its openness, interactive structure, and flexibility will contribute to the present understanding of newsmaking. Finally, the organizational differences have only marginally been addressed in *Publication IV*, and future research is encouraged to address this issue more systematically. c) *Temporal expansion:* A methodological challenge was the sampling of the routine periods and the uncertainty whether in some years extraordinary national events influenced news reporting (e.g., elections, wars). The dissertation has tried to take such events into account when discussing the findings, making me confident that the presented results provide an accurate picture of news coverage during routine periods.
- *Functional equivalents:* A major challenge in comparative research is finding functional equivalents when analyzing news content. This dissertation focuses on front pages, which was theoretically derived and legitimated; however, the comparison became difficult when news magazines were included, as in the second phase of the *NCCR Democracy*. Some were designed such as newspapers, while others appeared with a proper cover, which made the selection of news stories rather challenging (for more details on the sample, see *Publication I*, p. 995, *Publication II*, p. 204)

Despite these shortcomings, I am convinced that this dissertation is an important contribution to the relatively undeveloped field of comparative political communication research. Hopefully, it helps inform our understanding of the developments and trends in newsmaking across news systems, newspaper types and time and may provide a point of reference for researchers seeking to develop similar journalism models for other parts of the world.

4.3. Future Directions for Journalism Practice

Finally, this dissertation discusses the implications of commercialization and professionalization in relation to democratic newsmaking and addresses what communication researchers can do in terms of policy recommendations. At times, contemporary news media organizations fall short of fulfilling their democratic responsibilities, and there is growing concern about leaving news outlets fully to market forces. These forces may threaten the basic democratic functions of the news media. The problem intensifies when news organizations become more interventionist and take over functions and powers that had initially been the preserve of political leaders, political institutions and political organizations. It is challenging for citizens but also for politicians when the mass media exaggerate their control function and focus excessively on the negative and scandalous aspects of politics. To report on topics such as scandals or corruption is not necessarily detrimental. The critical watchdog function is fundamental for keeping political authorities accountable by monitoring their activities and revealing possible abuses of political power (see Curran, 1991). However, a problematic trend could be the increasing popularity of investigative reporting leading to false allegations and pseudo-revelations of scandals to entertain the public and increase sales. It is questionable when news reporting blindly builds on stereotypes, speculates instead of thoroughly investigates possible consequences, or actively invents scandals to capture public attention. Policy makers may consider how media policy may ensure that media outlets contribute to the functioning of our democracies. Tools to achieve this goal may include setting some general rules and encouraging media organizations to abide by self-chosen principles.

Naturally, such normative principles may require media businesses to accept and adopt certain accountability standards in their political affairs coverage, even if such quality standards are costly. It may also require media regulators to set framework conditions that provide incentives for media businesses to institutionalize and adopt self-regulatory bodies and practices that monitor content, respond to complaints and observe their responsibility with regard to the

common good. However, because the principle of media freedom forbids direct control, the most effective policy implication for us as scientists is to aspire to an ongoing public debate that raises awareness among political actors, media actors, and the news consuming public about how vital these qualities are for a healthy democracy. It is our responsibility to investigate potential gaps between normative aspirations and empirical realities. One way to do so is to collaborate with leading journalism schools or media organizations of all kinds, to which our latest findings from journalism studies should be presented. Such interchanges allow overcoming inhibitions on both sides: academics are said to be out of touch with the real world of journalism, whereas media practitioners are condemned to care little about journalistic quality standards, particularly in an era when journalistic education comes increasingly under economic pressure. Political communication scholars should embrace the opportunity to raise awareness for responsible news production processes that may facilitate positive implications for democracy. The media are perceived as democratic institutions with an obligation to help democracy work. Especially the high-brow press, examined here, is read with the purpose of acquiring knowledge for making informed choices. Nevertheless, the media's ability to keep the public ideally informed is only possible when citizens are interested.

5. References

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Appendix A: Personal Performance Record Related to Cumulative Thesis

Award on the Subject of Political News Journalism

“Top Faculty Paper Award” received from the Journalism Studies Division of the International Communication Association (ICA) in 2014 for “The Push to Popularize Politics: Comparing Public Affairs Coverage in Six News Systems since the 1960s” (with Frank Esser).

Contributions at Conferences on the Subject of Political News Journalism

Umbricht, Andrea & Esser, Frank (2014). The Push to Popularize Politics: Comparing Public Affairs Coverage in Six News Systems since the 1960s. Paper presented at the 64th Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (ICA), Seattle, USA, 22–26 May 2014.

Umbricht, Andrea & Esser, Frank & Büchel Florin (2014). The Packaging of Politics: Comparing Swiss Public Affairs Coverage to Other Countries and Earlier Decades. Paper presented at the Symposium “Disenchanted Swiss Democracy – Political Switzerland in the 21st Century”, Zurich, Switzerland, 23/24 January 2014.

Esser, Frank & Umbricht, Andrea (2013). Distinct Approaches to Newsmaking in Western Journalism? Comparing Political Affairs Coverage in Six Press Systems. Paper presented at the 63rd Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (ICA), London, UK, 17–21 June 2013.

Umbricht, Andrea & Esser, Frank (2012). Transnational Convergence or Nation-Specific Divergence? Comparing Newspapers of the 1960s and 2000s Across Six Western Countries. Paper presented at the 1st International Conference on Journalism Studies, Santiago de Chile, 27–29 July 2012.

Umbricht, Andrea & Esser, Frank (2012). Competing Models of Journalism? A Content Analysis of British, US American, German, Swiss, Italian and French Newspapers. Paper presented at the 62nd Annual Conference of the International Communication Association (ICA), Phoenix, USA, 24–28 May 2012.

Umbricht, Andrea & Büchel, Florin & Esser, Frank (2012). Transnationale Nachrichtenlogik? Politische Berichterstattungsstile 1960 und 2010 in sechs Ländern [*Transnational News Logic? Political Reporting Styles 1960 and 2010 in six Countries*]. Paper presented at the

57th Annual Conference of the German Communication Association (DGPuK), Berlin, Germany, 16–18 May 2012.

Umbricht, Andrea & Esser, Frank (2011). Relating Differences in News Content to National Context Factors: A Comparative Content Analysis of News Reporting Across Six Democracies. Paper presented at the European Communication Research and Education Association (ECREA), Political Communication Section: Comparing Political Communication Across Time and Space, Madrid, Spain, 20–21 October 2011.

Umbricht, Andrea (2011). Mediatization of Political Reality. Implications of Media-Centered Reporting Styles for Democracy. NCCR Democracy Roundtable Discussion with Guests from the Centre for Culture Media and Governance at Jamia Millia Islamia-University, Zurich, Switzerland, 20 April 2011.

Teaching Activities on the Subject of Political News Journalism

Seminar (2014). Die Medienrealität der Politik am Beispiel aktueller Debatten [*Media Reality of Politics and Current Debates*]. Undergraduate Level. Institute of Mass Communication and Media Research, University of Zurich.

Seminar (2013). Die Medienrealität der Politik am Beispiel aktueller Debatten [*Media Reality of Politics and Current Debates*]. Undergraduate Level. Institute of Mass Communication and Media Research, University of Zurich.

Seminar (2012). Politische Kommunikation in den USA: Das Präsidentschaftswahljahr 2012 [*Political Communication in the United States: The Presidential Election 2012*]. Undergraduate Level. Institute of Mass Communication and Media Research, University of Zurich.

Further Paper on the Subject of Political News Journalism

Umbricht, Andrea (2008): Die Politische Nachrichtenberichterstattung der Schweiz im Wandel der Zeit: Eine Analyse der Titelseiten von zwei Deutschschweizer Tageszeitungen der Jahre 1961 und 2006 [*Political News Coverage in Switzerland in the Course of Time: An Analysis of Front Pages of two Swiss German Newspapers from 1961 and 2006*]. Master's Thesis. University of Zurich.

Appendix B: Submitter's Own Contribution for Co-Authored Publications

Indication of the Submitter's Own Contribution for Co-Authored Publications

All four individual publications result from the same *NCCR Democracy* project. The project was initiated in 2007 during the first phase (2005–2007) of the *NCCR Democracy* when I was employed as student coder. At that time, the research design of the project was already selected for the most part: four Western democracies (USA, GBR, GER, SWI), two press sectors (national, regional) and two decades (1960/61, 2006/07). In the second phase (2009–2013) of the *NCCR Democracy* I was hired as Ph.D. student and the project became extended to a larger sample including two more southern European countries (FRA, ITA), two more decades (1972/73, 1994/95), and one more newspaper type (weeklies) for all countries. I was in charge of the case selection of France and Italy, the selection of newspapers for these countries (*Le Monde*, *Corriere della Sera*; *Ouest France*, *Resto del Carlino*; *L'Express*, *Espresso*), and the acquisition of the French and Italian newspaper copies from libraries in Paris and Bologna. Moreover, I was responsible for the entire applicant process and the selection of new coders, the coder training, the implementation of reliability tests, the supervision of the overall coding process throughout the second phase, and the integration of various national data sets into one main data set. In addition, I was the “driver” behind each manuscript, by taking the lead in writing, analysis, and in presenting our work at conferences. The initial draft writings were followed by extensive discussion with Prof. Frank Esser, who assisted in further developing the manuscripts.

The submitter's own efforts for co-authored publications are listed below and approved by the primary advisor Prof. Dr. Frank Esser.

The submitter's own contributions at a glance:

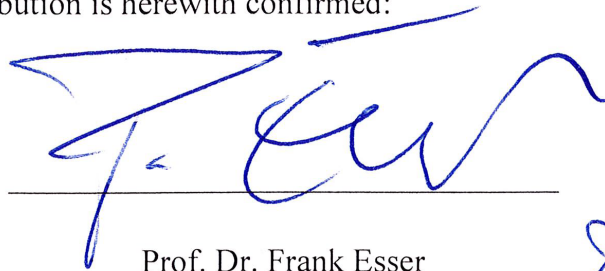
- Acquiring Swiss and German newspapers in libraries in Zurich and Bern (as student coder)
- Coding parts of the Swiss and German material (as student coder)
- Recommending countries for the case selection of southern European news systems
- Recommending French and Italian newspaper titles
- Organizing and acquiring French and Italian newspapers in libraries in Paris and Bologna
- Coordinating the applicant process and selecting new coders

- Educating French-, Italian-, English- and German-speaking coders
- Supervising the coding process with more than 20 coders
- Running reliability tests
- Controlling the project's budget of approx. 400'000 CHF
- Organizing and checking the coder's salary payments
- Composing reference letters for numerous coders
- Integrating various data sets (SPSS) from *NCCR Democracy* phase I and II
- Running data analyses
- Preparing drafts of new manuscripts
- Presenting our work at conferences and integrating conference feedbacks
- Revising manuscripts

The main advisor of this dissertation performed these efforts:

- Conceiving the idea upon which the entire project is based
- Developing the codebook (together with the former Ph.D. Katharina Hemmer)
- Commenting on and revising manuscripts through cooperative and collaborative mentoring
- Submitting, revising and resubmitting manuscripts to journals

The submitter's own contribution is herewith confirmed:



Prof. Dr. Frank Esser

Primarily Responsible Supervisor

20.2.2015

Appendix C: Copies of Individual Publications of Cumulative Thesis

Individual Publications of Cumulative Thesis

- Esser, Frank & Umbricht, Andrea (2013). Competing Models of Journalism? Political Affairs Coverage in U.S., British, German, Swiss, French and Italian Newspapers. *Journalism*, 14(8), 989–1007. doi: 10.1177/1464884913482551
- Umbricht, Andrea & Esser, Frank (2013). Changing Political News? Long-Term Trends in American, British, French, Italian, German and Swiss Press Reporting. In Raymond, Kuhn & Rasmus, Kleis Nielsen (Eds.), *Political Journalism in Transition: Western Europe in a Comparative Perspective* (pp. 185–218). London: I.B.Tauris.
- Esser, Frank & Umbricht, Andrea (2014). The Evolution of Objective and Interpretative Journalism in the Western Press. Comparing Six News Systems since the 1960s. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 91(2), 229–249. doi: 10.1177/1077699014527459
- Umbricht, Andrea & Esser, Frank (2014). The Push to Popularize Politics: Understanding the Audience-Friendly Packaging of Political News in Six Press Systems since the 1960s. *Journalism Studies*. Advance online publication. doi: 10.1080/1461670X.2014.963369

Appendix C1: Publication I

Bibliography:

Esser, Frank & Umbricht, Andrea (2013). Competing Models of Journalism? Political Affairs Coverage in U.S., British, German, Swiss, French and Italian Newspapers. *Journalism*, 14(8), 989–1007. doi: 10.1177/1464884913482551

Article



Competing models of journalism? Political affairs coverage in US, British, German, Swiss, French and Italian newspapers

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Abstract

A content analysis of 6525 randomly sampled political news stories from national, regional and weekly newspapers in six western countries between 1960 and today examines to which degree discursively defined reporting styles correspond to conceptual typologies of media systems and historical classifications of journalistic traditions. Univariate and multivariate analyses of three key indicators (opinion-orientation, objectivity, negativity) reveal three approaches to newsmaking: a US-led model of rational news analysis, an Italian-led model of polarized reporting, and a Germanic model of disseminating news with views. Merging a historically informed institutionalist approach with systematic content analysis, the study's main contribution to comparative communication research is to clarify our understanding of divergent models of journalism, contextualize existing media-system typologies, and revise assumptions about the affiliation of individual systems to certain models.

Keywords

Cross-national comparative research, models of journalism, political news, quantitative content analysis

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Cross-national differences in how news journalism has developed can be explained by long-standing historical processes in the formation of news media as social institutions. Scholars who view news media as institutions argue that news outlets within a given society share similar sets of norms and practices (Cook, 1998; Sparrow, 1999). Neo-institutionalism holds that news organizations within various countries become more similar to one another as they, in a historical group process, seek to differentiate themselves from their political environments and gain independence (Benson, 2004). The news media develops into a trans-organizational institution, and in each nation various factors push those working in this institution toward similar practices. These factors include professional consensus, intermedia co-orientation, operating in the same political and regulatory environment, and orienting their products towards the same audience (Cook, 2006). From a comparative perspective it is argued that historically rooted institutional conditions have served as nation-bound opportunity structures for the emergence of distinct profiles of journalism. These are defined here as patterns of news behavior identifiable across organizations that are seen (internally) by members of the profession and (externally) by members of society as the collective output of the national news media institution (Benson, 2004; Benson et al., 2012; Cook, 1998; Humphreys, 2011). Such a historically informed institutionalist approach quietly underlies a fair amount of recent research on media systems and journalistic traditions. We follow this gradually emerging approach and hope to make an informed contribution to its further development. In western journalism, to which this study is confined, three historical-institutional ‘pathways’ can be distinguished (see Mancini, 2005; Polumbaum, 2010; Williams, 2005).

Traditions of journalism

The first is the so-called *Anglo-American* pathway – sometimes called the ‘Liberal or Social Responsibility model’ (Siebert et al., 1956) or ‘Professional model’ (Tunstall, 1977). In a famous article titled ‘Journalism as an Anglo-American invention’, (Chalaby, 1996) describes it as ‘the’ modern conception of news. The Anglo-American model emphasizes the importance of being objective, detached and neutral in the recording of the news (Schudson, 2001). The emphasis on facts fits with the commercial needs of the Anglo-American press as it allows newspapers to sell their products to diverse readerships with differing political views and attitudes. Mancini (2005) identifies five main features of this model: (a) independence from political powers, (b) a control or watchdog function over political powers, (c) objectivity, (d) professional standards that reinforce the independence of journalism from other societal powers and professions, and (e) reporting functions that are distinct from those of comment and interpretation. Throughout the 20th century, it became the ‘dominant model of professional journalism’ (Mancini, 2005: 78) and an influential reference model for measuring and judging journalistic behaviors in other countries. It was progressively imported and adapted in newsrooms throughout Continental Europe; however, the extent to which it actually took hold depended heavily on the peculiarities of the social structures, political structures and media structures of the respective news systems. Journalists throughout Europe quickly learned to confess to the Anglo-American model because it lent an aura of legitimacy and professionalism to their

actions; yet the extent to which their practical work actually follows these public testimonies is another matter (Mancini, 2000). Only a comprehensive cross-national content analysis could shed light on this question. Interestingly, the gap between expectation and practice also holds true for US and British journalists where day-to-day news routines have often come to divert from the 'pure' model. Both US and British newspapers are said to have expanded the Anglo-American model in reality to also include more sensational, negative and interpretative journalism (which under the specific conditions of the British market has led to a rather partisan national press; see Hallin and Mancini, 2004). This partisanship, in particular, makes Great Britain a mixed case that apparently incorporates elements from more than one historical-institutional pathway. Again only a comparative content analysis can help locate the British press in relation to other western reporting traditions. An additional outcome of such an analysis may even be to reject the Anglo-American tradition as a homogenous empirical category in journalism research.¹

Whereas early researchers contrasted the Anglo-American tradition with a universal Continental European model, more recent accounts have differentiated a highly politicized, literary style of southern European journalism and a moderately politicized, Corporatist style of central European journalism (Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Mancini, 2005). Typical representatives of the southern European pathway (which in this study we call the *Polarized Mediterranean* model) are France and Italy. Here, the chronically weak financial state of newspapers, their elite orientation and limited readership, and their deeply engraved literary roots have led to a greater emphasis on interpretation and commentary than factual reporting (Mancini, 2000). According to many accounts, the Italian and French journalistic tradition has been to mix news and views and to prioritize opinion over reportage (Chalaby, 1996; Kuhn, 2007; Mancini, 2000, 2007). The greater dependence on state aid and political favoring, strong press-party ties and the late development of journalism as an independent profession have made scrutinizing watchdog reporting (i.e. media-initiated negativity) less likely. On the other hand, the media's intricate involvement with a polarized system that is characterized by internal conflicts and which uses the media as instruments in political disputes makes coverage of ideological confrontations (i.e. politician-initiated negativity) more likely.

The third European tradition refers to the *Corporatist* model, which spans the German-speaking, Benelux and Scandinavian countries, where different types of corporatism exist (for instance a more 'social' type in Norway or Denmark and a more 'liberal' type in Switzerland or Germany; see Katzenstein, 1985). Both types of Corporatist system are consensus democracies with an emphasis on compromise and power sharing (Lijphart, 1999). Democratic Corporatist systems are characterized by a wide range of political parties and organized groups which resolve their differences in partnership and come to collective decisions through bargaining and negotiation. This approach favors strong ties between newspapers, political parties and organized social forces, and thus a partisan reporting style. Although press partisanship has weakened over recent decades, this political structure – together with offshoots of the literary tradition stemming from the southern countries – has helped promote opinionated reporting (Mancini, 2000, 2005). The literary tradition here is less pronounced, however, than in the Polarized Mediterranean systems, and the connection to politics is not realized through instrumentalization but through a consensus around welfare state democracy. In summary, Corporatist news systems

combine a diminishing tradition of political parallelism, a moderate degree of external pluralism, a legacy of commentary-oriented journalism, and a growing emphasis on neutral professionalism and information-oriented journalism (Hallin and Mancini, 2004). Typical representatives of corporatism (in the liberal fashion) are Switzerland and Germany. They occupy an intermediate position between the other two models, with close geographic links to neighboring France and Italy and close cultural links to the Anglo-American systems (whose journalistic principles were imported to Germany during the re-education period after the Second World War, for example). It is an open question, however, how news practices in these two Germanic Corporatist countries have developed with regard to objectivity, opinion-orientation and negativism in relation to Anglo-American and Polarized Mediterranean news systems.

Research aims and hypotheses

These pathways or models are *ideal types* and the degree to which they fit empirically observable *real cases* is still largely unclear. This is acknowledged by Hallin and Mancini (2012a) who warn scholars explicitly not to thoughtlessly ‘apply’ their typology but to test its usefulness and justify its application in each individual case. They complain specifically about a lack of information about media content, stating that ‘content analysis across systems, guided by comparative theory, is in our view one of the most fundamental needs in our field’ (2012a: 218). Norris agrees that ‘rigorous cross-national data, based on content analysis of a representative range of media outlets and a random sample of stories, is extremely scarce’ (2011: 218). This is the starting point of our own study. By offering a comparative content analysis across all three pathways of journalism we not only hope to shed light on the relationship between theoretical ideal types and empirical real types but also to address unresolved controversies in comparative media-system research regarding the appropriate classification of Great Britain (for this controversy see Norris, 2009), the usefulness of the term Anglo-American journalism (introduced by Chalaby, 1996), and the degree of overlap between structure-based models of media systems (Hallin and Mancini, 2004) and discursively defined, content-based models (as investigated by our own study). The goal is to produce a classification of journalistic reporting styles that is based exclusively on content analysis and to assess how a combination of our results with existing typologies can further inform and advance our knowledge of comparative news system research.

The first theoretical dimension that is assumed to discriminate the reporting styles in the three models is *opinion-orientation* (see Benson and Hallin, 2007; Mancini, 2005). The greater proximity of the journalistic profession to intellectualism and the literary field on the one hand and the delayed differentiation of the journalistic field from the sphere of party politics on the other hand contributed to a greater emphasis on commentary and editorializing in Continental European journalism – particularly in the polarized south – than in the Anglo-American tradition. Despite a renaissance of opinionated journalism in the Anglo-American world (see Hallin, 2008), we expect mainstream news journalism in the USA and Britain to be more restrained in this regard. For instance, Benson and Hallin (2007) found ‘opinion’ and ‘interpretation’ to be more prevalent in the French press than ‘reporting’ and ‘background’ when compared to the US press. In

Corporatist German and Swiss newspapers, opinion-orientation will be less common than in southern European newspapers; however, due to a residual element of historical political parallelism and external pluralism, opinion-orientation will be higher than in Anglo-American newspapers (see also Wessler et al., 2010).

H1: The degree of opinion-orientation will be highest in newspapers from Polarized Mediterranean systems and lowest in those from Anglo-American systems.

The second dimension is *objectivity* – declared as ‘the’ defining characteristic of American journalism which ‘still today distinguishes US journalism from the dominant model of Continental European journalism’ (Schudson, 2001: 149). A survey by Donsbach and Klett (1993) found that US journalists express higher support for objectivity than British journalists and that German and Italian journalists rank lowest. They also found that US journalists rely more heavily on fact-gathering techniques and interviews with sources whereas German and Italian journalists rely more on their own values and ideas (Donsbach, 1995). This is not to say that Continental European reporters have not embraced the ideal of objectivity or do not observe its basic attributes. The difference according to Schudson (2001) is that in US journalistic culture it amounts to a core professional code together with a set of accepted routines that serve to defend the reporting from critique. These routines (Tuchman, 1978) include the presentation of contrasting points of view and a hard-facts-first structure (inverted pyramid). Additionally, in order to separate fact from fiction, supporting facts are attributed to authoritative sources, and sources’ statements are set off in quotation marks. We thus stipulate:

H2: The use of professional routines demonstrating adherence to the ideal of objectivity will be highest in US news stories and lowest in Polarized Mediterranean news stories. Great Britain and France will be borderline cases of their respective models.

We have added a qualification concerning Britain and France for the following reasons. In Britain, the objectivity norm is expected to be observed less rigidly than in the USA because the more highly competitive nature of the British press market has led to segmentation by political affinities, and the history of interventionist owners and tabloid reporting has favored biased reporting (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 214, 221). Among the Polarized Mediterranean systems, France is an exception in having a strong tradition of rational-legal authority, resulting in greater respect for norms and standardized behavioral procedures (2004: 136). We expect this to be reflected in a greater appreciation for the value of objectivity than in Italy (with Italy being the more genuine representative of the Mediterranean model).

The third relevant dimension is *negativity* in the news, which can express itself in at least four ways (Lengauer et al., 2012). First, it can describe an overall negative tone toward politics at the story level, aggregating statements voiced by political actors, other sources and the journalist as creator of the story. Second, it can reflect the degree of confrontation, power struggles and mutual attacks present among political actors in a given system. Third, it can indicate the emphasis placed by journalists on the weaknesses, failings, incapability and problems of political actors. Fourth, it can frame weaknesses, failings or incapacities as symptoms of a lingering affair or scandal.

Table 1. Selection of media outlets.

Models	Countries	News outlets	No. of articles	Article length ^a
Anglo-American	United States (USA)	<i>New York Times</i>	394	896
		<i>St. Louis Post-Dispatch</i>	283	590
		<i>Time Magazine</i>	198	1056
	Great Britain (GBR)	<i>The Times</i>	420	607
		<i>Birmingham Mail</i>	206	198
		<i>The Observer</i>	314	575
Corporatist Germanic	Germany (GER)	<i>Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung</i>	632	368
		<i>Rheinische Post</i>	517	199
		<i>Spiegel</i>	282	1299
	Switzerland (SUI)	<i>Neue Zürcher Zeitung</i>	306	522
		<i>Berner Zeitung</i>	338	256
		<i>Weltwoche</i>	264	1286
Polarized Mediterranean	France (FRA)	<i>Le Monde</i>	469	621
		<i>Ouest France</i>	331	443
		<i>L'Express</i>	244	1047
	Italy (ITA)	<i>Corriere della Sera</i>	547	620
		<i>Resto del Carlino</i>	482	490
		<i>Espresso</i>	298	1155

Notes: Sample N = 6525 articles; articles per country: USA = 875, GBR = 940, GER = 1431, SUI = 908, FRA = 1044, ITA = 1327; ^amedian words per article.

Due to greater commercial pressures on the press in Anglo-American systems (Aalberg et al., 2010; Benson and Hallin, 2007) journalists may favor stories that include negativity and lend themselves to more dramatic, conflict-emphasizing story-telling. In addition, the notion of the media as a watchdog or fourth branch of government is more deeply engraved in Anglo-American news culture, providing more incentives for journalists to uncover unpleasant aspects of the political process. The second-highest levels of negativity may be expected in Polarized Mediterranean systems which are characterized by deep cleavages, sharply opposed ideologies and open political conflicts (Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Sheafer and Wolfsfeld, 2009). In contrast, consensus democracies with a moderate polarization (e.g. Switzerland, Germany) rely more on compromise and negotiations for political decision-making, thereby reducing the potential for conflict news (cf. Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 60).

H3: The level of negativity in the news will be lower in the consensus-oriented Corporatist systems than in the Anglo-American systems (due to critical watchdog reporting and higher commercialization) or the southern European systems (due to polarized pluralism and coverage of attack politics).

Method

We conducted a quantitative content analysis of 18 news outlets from six national media systems. The relevant details can be seen on Table 1. The rationale of the country selection

was to include two national cases per model. We picked one ‘prototypical’ representative of the Liberal (USA), Corporatist (SUI) and Polarized model (ITA) and added to each model a ‘borderline’ case including elements from one additional model (GBR, GER, FRA; for details see Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 10–14, 69–71). This sample should enable us to draw conclusions about how distinct or how porous the borders of the news cultures within these three models are, and whether the three models of media system do indeed overlap with distinct sets of news practices as measured by manifest content features.

Data gathering

We content-analyzed the political affairs coverage in randomly selected routine periods from the 1960s (the beginning of the so-called golden period of journalism; Tunstall, 1996) to the late 2000s (the period of global, digital and commercial competition; Tunstall, 2008). This also covers the recent history of the three pathways of western journalism as outlined by Mancini (2005). We sampled political news stories from three news outlets per country in the years 1960–61, 1972–73, 1994–95 and 2006–07. The three outlets (see Table 1) come from different press sectors – national, regional and weekly – in which these outlets have a high circulation and a reputation for being typical. For instance, in the USA we selected the *New York Times* (national newspaper of record), the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* (large independent regional newspaper founded by Joseph Pulitzer) and *Time Magazine* (the largest news weekly in US history). We decided to include a regional instead of a tabloid newspaper because, with the exception of Britain, all other press markets have historically been shaped more by regional (and super-regional) than tabloid newspapers. Tabloids of the British sort are close to non-existent in France, Italy and the United States; Germany and Switzerland have produced no more than a single tabloid, each being relatively tame due to a monopoly position. As a compromise we selected in Britain the *Birmingham Mail* which was the largest regional newspaper in tabloid form between 1960–61 and 1994–95 (Franklin and Murphy, 1998) but has since – mirroring the general demise of the British regional press – lost its significance. Another noteworthy point is that news magazines in the tradition of *Time* could not gain a foothold in Britain because their function was always well-served by the Sunday newspapers of which the *Observer* was added to the British sample.

We categorized as ‘political’ all news stories that discussed at least one regional, national or international political actor or institution and its actions. In every second month of the four time periods under investigation (1960–61, 1972–73, 1994–95 and 2006–07) one random issue of each news outlet was examined. In line with common practice in comparative international news research (Benson, 2009, 2010; Benson et al., 2012; Strömbäck and Aalberg, 2008; Strömbäck and Dimitrova, 2006; Strömbäck and Luengo, 2008) we treated the front page as the main locus for observing relevant style and format features. Hence, in the selected issues all political articles starting on the front page (including those continued on inside pages) *plus* all those whose headlines were listed (but actually published on *inside* pages) were included in the analysis.² This procedure had to be adapted for those weeklies that are published as news magazines. Here, in addition to all stories mentioned on the cover, we also included those stories highlighted in the table of contents, usually with bold letters or a picture.

The goal of the sampling strategy was to identify those articles that are given the greatest prominence and have maximum potential to reach the largest audience. This procedure yielded a total of $N = 6525$ news items, which form the universe of our analysis.

Coding categories

The relevant style and format elements used to measure differences in news journalism were operationalized as follows. To tap *opinion-orientation* we expanded a classification introduced by Benson and Hallin (2007) and coded each article for its main journalistic function: whether it is 'straight news' (descriptive, concise), 'long news with background' (providing context), 'interpretation and analysis' (explanation, speculation), 'opinion' (unequivocal commentaries or stories mixing information with opinion), or 'interview'. We are mainly interested in the 'opinion' category, which captures editorials, personal columns, and commentary, plus those types of story that mingle information with subjective assessments and evaluations.³

The degree to which journalists follow reporting techniques that the profession recognizes as indicators of *objectivity* (Tuchman, 1978) was measured by coding the presence or absence of five story features: the presentation of opposing 'pros and cons' viewpoints; the use of 'expert sources'; the use of 'quotes and paraphrases'; a 'hard-facts-first structure'; and formal 'separation of facts and opinion'. Through these strategies, journalists signal the truthfulness and neutrality of their reporting. We construct an aggregate objectivity index for each story that sums up the five dichotomous sub-dimensions and ranges (based on a standardized formula) from 0 to 1.⁴

We operationalize *negativity* with four indicators measured at the story level (Lengauer et al., 2012). 'Negative tone' captures whether the tonality of a story is pessimistic irrespective of the political topic covered; 'conflict frame' is coded if a story centers around political struggles, disputes or disagreements; political 'incompetence' captures skepticism toward capabilities and an emphasis on political weakness and shortcomings; and 'political scandal' refers to intense public communication about a real or imagined defect or misbehavior in politics that meets widespread indignation or outrage. Again, a standardized aggregate index is constructed that sums up the four indicators and ranges from 0 to 1.

Coding procedures

All coding was done with bilingual coders who were fluent in the project language and the additional languages required for the study. All coding instruments and all coder training were conducted in the project language; training and coding was closely supervised by the authors (observing the principles laid out for cross-national content analyses by Roessler, 2012). Training included detailed discussions of individual articles, cultural references, key concepts and our operationalizations. Successive intercoder reliability tests were run for all language groups based on the coding of at least 30 articles within each language group. We used Cohen's *kappa*, which is a rather conservative measure that gives credit only to agreement beyond chance. The average Cohen's *kappa* coefficients were calculated separately for all language groups and separately for format-based

Table 2. Inter-coder reliability tests (Cohen's *kappa* coefficients).

Language groups	Format-based variables	Content-based variables
German	.83	.70
English	.83	.67
French	.91	.62
Italian	.89	.62
Average	.87	.65

story elements (e.g. size, placement, genre) and content-based elements (e.g. topics, actors, frames). Landis and Koch (1977: 165) characterize values < 0 as indicating no agreement, 0–0.20 as slight, 0.21–0.40 as fair, 0.41–0.60 as moderate, 0.61–0.80 as substantial, and 0.81–1 as almost perfect agreement. For all format-based variables the average level of agreement was in the ‘almost perfect’ range, while for the content-based variables it was in the ‘substantial’ range (see Table 2). These values are fully in line with other *kappa*-tests in cross-nationally comparative news studies (see Brüggemann and Kleinen-von Königsłow, 2009; Dimitrova and Strömbäck, 2012).

Results

Following our theoretical argument about individual news outlets being components of a collective trans-organizational field that within each society follows similar norms and practices (as a result of historically developed professional consensus, intermedia co-orientation, embedding in the same political and economic system, and aligning products to the same national audience), we will combine all three news outlets per system as *one* aggregate indicator of national journalistic style in our further analysis. Our empirical argument for combining the three papers per country is that for all concepts central to this study (opinion-orientation, objectivity, negativity) the effect sizes are greater between press systems than between types of news outlets. This finding – revealed by partial eta squares in a preliminary one-factorial analysis of variance – confirms our decision to examine our results only at the system level. These system-level analyses capture journalistic practices as manifested in content across the three market sectors (national, regional, weekly) and over a five-decade period (1960s to 2000s). For lack of space we must refrain from considering changes over time; such developmental trends are discussed in Umbricht and Esser (2013). Despite the high level of aggregation the following analyses allow us to sketch out characteristic patterns of the various models of news reporting.

Opinion-orientation

H1 expects the degree of opinion-orientation to be highest in news outlets embedded in Polarized Mediterranean systems and lowest in outlets from Anglo-American systems. As can be seen from Table 3, the French and Italian newspapers do share a pattern of publishing less ‘straight news’ and more ‘opinion’ items than Anglo-American

Table 3. Type of article (in percentage).

	USA	GBR	GER	SUI	FRA	ITA
Straight news	15	27	29	25	9	13
Long background news	42	35	33	23	39	27
Analysis and interpretation	32	20	15	22	19	26
Opinion	10^c	16^b	18^b	25^a	27^a	23^a
Interview	0	1	4	6	5	11
Total %	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total N=6454 articles	(n=873)	(n=940)	(n=1422)	(n=897)	(n=1014)	(n=1308)

Notes: Totals can be different from 100% due to rounding. Values with different superscript letters are significantly different; values with the same superscript are not statistically different (post-hoc Dunnett's T3 test at $p < .05$ level).

newspapers. The lowest degree of opinion-orientation is found in the US newspapers (10% opinionated articles) and the highest in the French (27%). Testing H1, a univariate analysis of variance yielded significant differences in the means for 'opinion' between the six countries ($F(5, 6448) = 25.29, p < 0.001, R^2\text{-adj.} = 0.018$) although the R-square indicates only a small proportion of explained variance. A post-hoc test, which performs multiple t-tests in each pair of countries, denotes that the low mean for the US newspapers is exceptional as it differs significantly from all other countries ($p < 0.001$).

Although the data in Table 3 lend support to H1 it is noteworthy that the distinction between the journalistic styles is less clear-cut than the theoretical models let us expect. This is mainly due to the fairly large shares of 'long background news' and 'analysis and interpretation' in most of the examined newspapers. In fact, the share of 'analysis and interpretation' is largest in the US newspapers – a feature that has already triggered an extensive academic debate: Whereas some see interpretive, contextualizing journalism as a welcome opportunity for a better informed public (Bennett, 2005), others see it as an improper departure from the ideal of descriptive journalism – mainly reflecting the journalists' intention to gain control over the political communication process and insert their own critical expertise and judgment into the story (Patterson, 1993). We have tried to draw the following dividing line in the empirical operationalization. Articles with an emphasis on explanation, analysis, meaning, investigation, revelation or questioning were coded as 'analysis and interpretation'; stories with an emphasis on subjective evaluation, commentary or expression of opinion were assigned to the 'opinion' category.

Objectivity

In line with the findings of Donsbach and Klett (1993), our data identify US news coverage as containing the largest share of features signaling professional routines of objective reporting. As can be seen from Table 4, the US newspapers under investigation reveal the largest amount of 'pros and cons', 'expert sources' and 'quotes and paraphrases'. The standardized objectivity index is highest for the US newspapers (69%) and lowest for the Italian newspapers (48%). Differences across the six nations' standardized objectivity indices are statistically highly significant ($F(5, 6204) = 110.99, p < 0.001, R^2\text{-adj.} = 0.081$)

Table 4. Objectivity in news stories (means of dichotomous variables).

Inclusion of...	USA	GBR	GER	SUI	FRA	ITA
Pros and cons	.63	.44	.55	.48	.45	.25
Expert sources	.33	.14	.24	.29	.17	.07
Quotes and paraphrases	.94	.73	.77	.79	.81	.82
A hard-facts-first structure	.74	.75	.75	.72	.63	.59
Separation of facts and opinion	.81	.83	.89	.74	.80	.66
Std. Objectivity Index	.69^a	.57^c	.64^b	.59^c	.57^c	.48^d
Total N=6210 articles	870	914	1319	790	1012	1305

Notes: If one of the five dichotomous sub-variables was missing in an article, the article in question was excluded from the Standardized Objectivity Index. The mean scores of the index range from 0 to 1. Means with different superscript letters are significantly different; means with the same superscript are not statistically different (post-hoc Dunnett's T3 test at $p < .05$ level).

and go generally in the direction as predicted. H2 expected the use of objectivity rituals to be most visible in US reports and least visible in Mediterranean news reports, and it expected Great Britain and France to be borderline cases of their respective models. This is pretty much what Table 4 shows. The British newspapers show fewer objectivity indicators and the French more than their partnering country in the same model, thus confirming the relevance of the historical traditions as outlined in the theory section.

Table 4 also reveals information on cross-national differences in the understanding of diversity. Here we build on Benson (2009) who argues that giving both sides of arguments in a debate is more likely in news systems with internal pluralism than external pluralism. The US journalistic tradition has always been linked more to the ideal of internal pluralism (where each media outlet expresses a diversity of viewpoints) than external pluralism (where diversity is realized through a range of outlets with each promoting a different viewpoint; see Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 29). Our findings in Table 4 demonstrate that the inclusion of 'pros and cons' is indeed highest in the US newspapers (63%) and lowest in the Italian newspapers (25%), and the two values differ significantly from all other countries. This concurs with findings by Ferree et al. (2002: 240) according to which US journalists are more likely to include speakers with opposing views in the same article than their Continental European counterparts. Internal pluralism is typical for the Liberal media systems, with the important exception of Britain where external pluralism prevails (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 208), which is again fully supported by our data (see the relatively low value of 44% for 'pros and cons' in British newspapers; Table 4). In this regard the British press seems to align more with the Continental European reporting practice than with the US practice.

Negativity

The amount of negativity in political affairs coverage across the six news systems varies substantially, as our findings in Table 5 show. The standardized negativity indices differ significantly between the countries ($F(5, 5287) = 58.92, p < 0.001, R^2\text{-adj.} = 0.052$). The news stories in the consensus democracies of Switzerland and Germany are least

Table 5. Negativity in news stories (means of dichotomous variables).

Focus on...	USA	GBR	GER	SUI	FRA	ITA
Negative tone	.43	.48	.36	.34	.52	.54
Conflict frame	.52	.67	.45	.51	.63	.69
Political incompetence	.47	.52	.47	.40	.66	.74
Political scandals	.23	.27	.18	.15	.30	.25
Std. Negativity Index	.42^c	.49^b	.38^{cd}	.36^d	.56^a	.57^a
Total N=5293 articles	802	785	1139	758	649	1160

Notes: If one of the four dichotomous sub-variables was missing in an article, the article in question was excluded from the Standardized Negativity Index. The mean scores of the index range from 0 to 1. Means with different superscript letters are significantly different; means with the same superscript are not statistically different (post-hoc Dunnett's T3 test at $p < .05$ level).

negative (SUI = 36%, GER = 38%) whereas political affairs reporting in the Polarized Mediterranean systems is most negative (ITA = 57%, FRA = 56%). This is in line with our hypothesis; the only deviation from H3 is that the negativity values for the southern European systems are higher than for the Anglo-American systems. We had expected that the effects of commercialization and watchdog orientation in Britain and the USA would produce at least similar (if not higher) levels of negativity than the effects of polarization and inter-party contestation in France and Italy. But it seems that the effects of the political systems are stronger than those of the media system.

Benson and Hallin (2007) and Benson (2010) had also found that negativity was higher in French than US political affairs coverage. Drawing on Peter (2003) we explain this by the fact that journalists rely on cues they get from political elites, and if these elites are constantly implicated in mutual attacks and confrontations it will drive up the level of 'negative tone', 'conflict frames' and allegations of 'political incompetence' (see Table 5). This also ties in with Sheaffer and Wolfsfeld's (2009) comparative analysis. It established that polarized multi-party systems as found in France, Italy or Israel (see examples by Sheaffer and Wolfsfeld, 2009: 161) are a crucial contingent condition (or mediating variable) for explaining negativity in the news. They give three reasons for this: first, polarized multi-party systems provide access to a broader range of oppositional voices to enter the political debate, some of them from radical parties or dissident non-elite sources that are simply too attractive from a media logic perspective to be left out of journalists' news coverage. Second, audiences growing up in polarized multi-party systems expect a greater magnitude of dissent from a wider range of viewpoints to be represented in the media. Third, journalists develop a wider understanding of the range of political dissent that is still within the confines of the 'sphere of legitimate controversy' (Hallin, 1984). This may at times be combined with a feeling of being pressurized or instrumentalized which – according to findings by Van Dalen et al. (2011) – has led to higher levels of political cynicism among journalists in Polarized Mediterranean systems than journalists from Anglo-American or Corporatist systems.

In sum, our findings suggest that whereas negativity in the Anglo-American press is induced by trends towards commercialization and professional critique, the degree of negativity in the Mediterranean systems is influenced more by the southern European

tradition of opinionated journalism and the high degree of polarization, ideological diversity and conflict.⁵

Mapping the findings

The ultimate goal of this study has been to identify theoretically grounded indicators that discriminate traditions of news reporting and explore whether these discursive, content-based models show resemblance with existing models in media systems research. To facilitate this mapping exercise we rely on a correspondence analysis whose results are depicted in Figure 1. Some words of explanation: correspondence analysis is an inductive method used to reveal the structure of a complex data matrix and to represent it on a visual map, that is, as points within a space, thereby facilitating the interpretation of results (Clausen, 1998).⁶ Our correspondence analysis is based on a contingency table cross-classifying the six home systems of newspapers (USA, GBR, GER, SUI, FRA, ITA) by the content features found in these newspapers (type of article, objectivity indicators, negativity indicators). Press systems with similar distributions of news practices are represented as points that are close in space, and systems that have very dissimilar

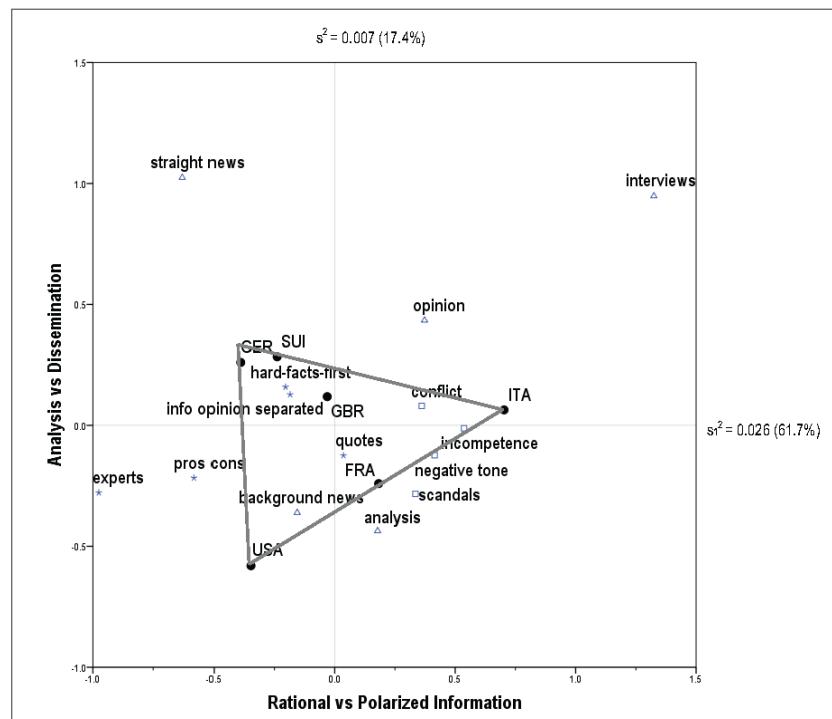


Figure 1. Correspondence analysis: mapping of systems and practices (symmetrical normalization).

distributions are positioned furthest apart. The two-dimensional solution presented in Figure 1 explains 79.1 percent of the variance.

The *first dimension* (horizontal x-axis) explains 61.7 percent of total variance and represents a polarity between characteristics of objectivity and negativity. It is labeled 'rational versus polarized information' and derived from Hallin and Mancini's (2004: 57–61, 2012b: 291–292) discussion of divergent approaches toward professional news-making: one is tied to 'rational-legal authority' (relying on empirically observed, systematically researched facts that are presented in a detached manner) and the other to 'polarization' (relying on fuzzy partisanship that follows the fights of one's parallel party and is negative to the parties on the other side of the spectrum; see Poletti and Brants, 2010: 334). The *second dimension* (vertical y-axis) covers 17.4 percent of total variance and is labeled 'analysis versus dissemination'. It reproduces the popularity of various article types. The much lower percentage of explained variance for the second dimension indicates that it is less important and also less coherent. It represents a preference for 'disseminating' news and views (straight news, opinion, interviews) in the upper part of the matrix and 'analyzing' information (in background articles and news analyses) in the lower part of the matrix. In the *joint space between these dimensions*, three models of news reporting shine through.

- The lower left corner of the emerging triangle is occupied by the three US newspapers under study in which a 'rational analysis' of news prevails, favoring critical yet fact-based interpretation of political affairs. Preferred reporting features are the inclusion of expert sources, opposing viewpoints and frequent quotations, whereas interviews with politicians and prominently featured commentaries are less common. This practice is reminiscent of the Anglo-American news tradition, but with a strong analytical angle.
- The right-hand corner of the triangle is represented by the Italian newspapers examined here; in them a negative, conflict-oriented and opinionated reporting style prevails. Atypical of this style is the consideration of all those elements that in the Anglo-Saxon understanding make up the ideal of objective journalism.
- The upper left corner is populated by the German and Swiss newspaper outlets where we find a characteristic coexistence of news and opinion. The emphasis on news is clearly more pronounced (but less scrutinizing than in the US newspapers), and opinion is usually separated (although featured more prominently than in the US newspapers).

In between the three polar ends are the French and British newspapers which occupy middle positions because they combine elements from various traditions. The distance of the French from the Italian press can be well explained by the greater relative appreciation of 'rational' standards of professional conduct in France (like systematic procedures and transparent norms in the workplace; see Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 136–137). The proximity of the British to the Corporatist press can be well explained by the greater relative appreciation of the dual dissemination of 'news and views' (as is readily recognizable by the greater press-party parallelism in the British press; see Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 210–214).

Discussion

Although our content analysis relies on a different empirical foundation, its theoretical approach is compatible with the historical-institutional paradigm underlying the work of Hallin and Mancini (2004). As stated at the start of this article (and reiterated at the beginning of the Results section), our own neo-institutionalist approach has led us to combine all news organizations embedded in the same system and consider them as components of *one* (loosely coupled, yet institutionally integrated) national journalistic field. Neo-institutionalism is of relevance for comparative media research for two reasons. First, it provides a rationale for why news outlets within a given system are pushed towards similar practices, thereby fulfilling important criteria of an institution (Cook, 1998: 70). Second, cross-national differences in how media institutions developed are explained by long-standing historical traditions and contemporary conditions, which shape news discourse in characteristic directions (Benson, 2004: 281). In our analysis, we have examined several theoretically relevant news practices – first separately, then cumulatively in a correspondence analysis – and viewed them as representations of institutionally guided, historically developed pathways of journalism that we subjected to a comparative analysis. Not only can the discursive models emerging from this procedure be compared among themselves, they can also be related to existing typologies of media systems research. Based on a content analysis of the use of three key indicators (opinion-orientation, objectivity, and negativity) we find in the US newspapers a coexistence of objective and interpretative journalism (allowing for a ‘rational analysis’ of news), in the Italian newspapers a coexistence of opinionated and negative news (promoting the provision of ‘polarized’ information), and in the German and Swiss newspapers a coexistence of news and views (although with an emphasis on rational, factual and consensual reporting). French and British newspapers occupy borderline positions which support, as indeed do all other cases, our theoretical expectations to a very large extent. Hypotheses 1 to 3 have been largely confirmed, and where there were discrepancies in detail, the contradictions were resolved in the overall view of the findings (in the correspondence analysis) or could be plausibly explained by extending existing assumptions about the models.

We believe our study contributes to the comparative communication research in several ways. So far, the comparative literature is influenced by conceptions of journalism which have arisen either from (potentially unreliable) self-declarations of news people or from understandings of media systems that focus on structure (but not content). Our models as presented here are based on an analysis of manifest news content reflecting actual production practices; they fill a serious gap in the literature and help validate but also rectify existing typologies in important ways.

Two possible rectifications may be mentioned here. The oft-encountered admission of journalists in Italy to adhering to the neutral ideal of objectivity, as Mancini (2000) already suspected, proved to be exaggerated. Furthermore, the ideal of Anglo-American journalism as a coherent benchmark – established by Chalaby (1996) and celebrated to this day (see Mancini, 2005) – turned out to be a category of limited and at most historical value. In current practice, American and British press journalists fulfill the ideal’s expectations remarkably differently and inconsistently. A longitudinal analysis of our

data (see Umbricht and Esser, 2013) shows that over time British newspapers seem to be aligning more with continental European papers than with US papers. It is particularly interesting to see that British newspapers seem to be absorbing more and more Polarized elements in their day-to-day coverage of politics (Umbricht and Esser, 2013).

Taking into account the nuances and qualifications in the typology of Hallin and Mancini (2004), and also their comments on France and Great Britain as mixed cases, we find qualified support for their basic assumptions but also an opportunity for further development. Our study is subject to restrictions, of course, as no three news outlets can represent the entire news culture of a system. Replications with larger media samples are needed to provide more definite answers to the questions raised here. In addition, questions regarding organizational differences and temporal differences had to remain unaddressed. With regard to temporal differences we can state, however, that a follow-up analysis focusing specifically on the development over time found clear cross-national convergence in the preference for opinion-oriented reporting but persistent divergence in the use of objectivity-related and negativity-related reporting (Umbricht and Esser, 2013).

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Notes

1. The usage of the term Anglo-American hints to the many shared characteristics of Great Britain and the United States (liberal democracies with little state intervention in the press, majoritarian political systems, two large catch-all parties and many catch-all newspapers, etc.) but should not mask important differences concerning the role of public broadcasting, press partisanship, tabloid news culture and competition among many national newspapers.
2. An additional necessary adaptation concerned the front page of *The Times*. In 1960–61 this was reserved for advertisements and obituaries so for those years we coded political articles from the inside pages (only those half a page or larger, or accompanied by a picture or a very bold headline; $n = 124$).
3. Some of our other publications use different differentiations. Some keep the sub-categories ‘unequivocal commentaries’ and ‘stories mixing information with opinion’ separate, some collapse ‘straight news’ and ‘long background news’ into one category depending on theoretical considerations.
4. To standardize the aggregate objectivity index, the sum total of the five sub-dimensions for each country is divided by the number of sub-dimensions as expressed in this formula: $(x_i - \min_{[th]}) / (\max_{[th]} - \min_{[th]})$. Here x_i refers to the empirical value of the aggregate objectivity index x , and $[th]$ to the minimal (here 0) and maximal (here 5) theoretical value of the aggregate index.
5. However, contrary to Benson’s (2010) suggestion, this may not be a result of a more debate-oriented journalism that structures news around the arguments and counterarguments of competing groups because – particularly in the case of Italy – the share of ‘pros and cons’, the inclusion of knowledgeable ‘experts’, and the emphasis on ‘hard facts’ is relatively underdeveloped (as reported in Table 4). In future analyses we will address this question more systematically.

6. The steps of correspondence analysis are as follows: category profiles (relative frequencies) and masses (marginal proportions) are computed, the distances between these points are calculated, and the best-fitting spaces of n dimensions are located. Rotation then occurs to maximize the inertia (variance) explained by each factor, as in principal components analysis.

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Appendix C2: Publication II

Bibliography:

Umbricht, Andrea & Esser, Frank (2013). Changing Political News? Long-Term Trends in American, British, French, Italian, German and Swiss Press Reporting. In Raymond, Kuhn & Rasmus, Kleis Nielsen (Eds.), *Political Journalism in Transition: Western Europe in a Comparative Perspective* (pp 195–218). London: I.B.Tauris.

10

Changing Political News? Long-term Trends in American, British, French, Italian, German, and Swiss Print Media Reporting

Andrea Umbricht and Frank Esser

Introduction

Two opposing perspectives are prevalent in international comparative journalism research. The first assumes that political journalism in Western media systems has undergone a slow but definite standardisation since the 1960s – driven by the diffusion of Anglo-American professional standards, the influence of global news leaders such as the BBC, the *New York Times*, Reuters and the Associated Press, and the imitation of reporting techniques proved to be professionally (journalism prizes) or commercially (audience responses) successful in the Anglo-American world. In addition, the emergence of global media markets and technological standards as well as European integration and the Americanisation of popular culture are seen as further forces driving the homogenisation of media. The opposite perspective does not deny these tendencies but argues that these processes will not eradicate deep-seated differences in national media structures and news cultures. These systemic differences have led Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini (2004) to develop three ‘models’ of Western media systems which, according to them, have shown their distinct contours most clearly in the 1960s and 1970s. Since then, they argue, Western media systems have become partially more similar without losing their different identities. The authors support their thesis of the continued relevance of the three models with evidence gathered mainly at the institutional level of media systems. What they do not examine, however, is the content produced by news media. In this chapter, we aim to fill this gap by examining

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systematically whether the political news coverage produced by print media in six Western media systems have retained their characteristic differences over time or whether the content produced in different systems has become gradually more alike.

The comparative approach: three models of media and politics

The field of comparative political communication research has steadily grown during the last decades. Several scholars have theorised about and investigated empirically the influences of national media systems and political and cultural contexts (e.g., Semetko et al., 1991; Blumler and Gurevitch, 2001; Pfetsch, 2001), and identified different models of journalism after comparing historical roots and contemporary practices (e.g., Mancini, 2005; Williams, 2005). These works are consistent with a framework developed by Hallin and Mancini (2004) that uses four media-related and five politics-related dimensions to differentiate different types of political communication systems. The media-related dimensions are the development of an audience-oriented and commercialised mass press; parallelism between party lines and newspaper lines; journalistic professionalism and independence; and the degree of state intervention in the regulation of media. The five politics-related dimensions concern the role of the state in society; majoritarian or consensus character of the political system; pattern of interest group organisation; distinction between moderate and polarised pluralism; and development of rational-legal authority in contrast to clientelist forms of social organisation.

On this basis, Hallin and Mancini establish three ideal typical models that form the theoretical backbone of our analysis: the liberal model, the democratic corporatist model, and the polarised pluralist model. They categorise as liberal those countries where press freedom and mass-circulation press developed early, where state interference in the media sector is low, and where parallelism between political parties and editorial preferences of newspapers is also low. On the other hand, internal pluralism in newspapers is high, as is the professional status and political independence of journalists. The established textbook history argues that news organisations in this model gained independence from party political bonds in the middle of the nineteenth century when commercial pressures began to push partisanship out of newspapers (Chalaby, 1996:

320). The US press is often presented as a case in point. Here, newspapers became prosperous in the 1880s because they increased their readership by reducing one-sided propaganda (Fengler and Russ-Mohl, 2008: 679). The fact that newspapers supplanted commentaries by news reports facilitated the spread of the objectivity norm and boosted revenues from sales and advertising (Chalaby, 1996: 303). The United States, Canada, and Ireland are other countries grouped as liberal, as is, with some restrictions, Great Britain.

The polarised pluralist model features an elite-oriented press with limited overall circulation. Journalism here originates as an extension of the worlds of literature and politics and has historically been an elite occupation. The literary and political roots can be seen in the strong presence of commentaries, intellectual analysis, political judgement, and ideological tendencies (Benson and Hallin, 2007: 35). Newspapers are largely focused on politics and distinguished by relatively strong external pluralism and advocacy journalism. Political parallelism dominated for most of the twentieth century, and the tradition of partisan newspapers overlapped with the practice of instrumentalisation. Many newspapers did not become financially independent and stayed reliant on the goodwill and support of political parties, the state, and/or influence-seeking owners (Hallin and Papathanassopoulos, 2002: 18; Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 114). Press freedom developed late, professionalisation was weak, and the autonomy of journalists limited. At the national level of polarised pluralist systems, formal accountability systems like press councils are absent, professional organisations and journalists' unions are generally weak, and there is little consensus on ethical standards in the media (Rieffel, 1984). Spain, Portugal, and Italy are classified in this model, as is, with some restrictions, France.

The *democratic corporatist* model includes countries with an early development of press freedom, high newspaper circulation, and strong journalistic professionalisation. The historically strong political parallelism in the media bears traces of external pluralism and slightly partisan and advocate opinion journalism. Partisan journalism is rooted in the close ties to politics through corporatist bargaining and interest negotiations. It coexists with a high level of professionalism which is evident in the widespread recognition of ethical norms regardless of journalists' political affiliations (Williams, 2005: 66). Systems belonging to this model include Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark and the other Nordic countries, as well as Germany and Switzerland.

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Naturally these models represent theoretical ideal types, and some real-world cases cannot be categorised easily. For instance the liberal model suggests a professional emphasis on neutrality but much British newspaper journalism shows remarkable degrees of political parallelism and is more adequately assigned a mid-position between US professionalism and continental European partisan tendencies (Schudson, 2001: 167). The notion ‘Anglo-American’ refers to the numerous commonalities between the British and US media and political systems (liberal democracies with little state intervention in the press, majoritarian political systems, two large catch-all parties and many catch-all newspapers, etc.), but obscures some very important differences (the greater role of public broadcasting, press partisanship, tabloid news culture, and competition in Britain). It is thus necessary to ask whether such an Anglo-American model really exists (Mancini, 2005: 78). France is another mixed case, falling between the polarised pluralist and democratic corporatist models. It is characterised by a strong role of the state, polarised pluralism, and a history of strong political parallelism, but also by a relatively strong mass-oriented regional press and a more developed tradition of rational–legal authority that favor a more fact-oriented news style.

Our study examines how relevant Hallin’s and Mancini’s typology of media systems is in terms of explaining news coverage produced by print media embedded in each of these systems, a relationship that many scholars have noted we know little about (e.g., Jones, 2007: 130). We derive hypotheses from the aforementioned models and relate them directly to measurable characteristics of news content. We then compare the results of a content analysis with the expectations derived from the theoretical models. We are thus in a position to examine whether the historical and structural differences behind the models are reflected in political news coverage and whether there is a blurring of reporting styles over time due to globalisation, commercialisation, diffusion, and European integration.

Theoretical dimensions and hypotheses

The first content-related indicator that can be expected to differentiate journalistic output across Western press systems is *opinion-orientation* in the news (Benson and Hallin, 2007; Wessler et al., 2010; Strömbäck and Dimitrova, 2006). Journalism in continental European systems has often been found to be more opinionated than in liberal media systems

(Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 61–3). Surveys have also repeatedly shown that journalists from continental European systems subscribe to more active reporting roles and are more comfortable with advocating a political position than their Anglo-American colleagues who see themselves as detached observers (Donsbach and Patterson, 2004; Hanitzsch, 2011). The proximity of the journalistic profession to the literary field and the later differentiation from the political sphere have contributed to a greater emphasis on commentary and advocacy in European journalism – particularly in the Mediterranean countries – than in the Anglo-American tradition. We thus expect elements of opinion-orientation to be highest in newspapers from polarised pluralist systems. The second-highest level of opinion-orientation may be expected in newspapers from the democratic corporatist model where, due to a residual element of historical political parallelism and systems characterised by external pluralism, opinionated news will be more widespread than in the Anglo-American system (Wessler et al., 2010: 237). Finally, in line with the standardisation hypothesis discussed above, we expect the level of opinion-orientation in the news to converge over time, reflecting a growing professional consensus about the norms of news reporting, in particular with regard to the inclusion of journalistic voice.

H 1.1: The degree of opinion-orientation in the news is highest in polarised pluralist news systems and lowest in the US news system.

H 1.2: Due to globalisation and the spread of critical professionalism, the level of opinion-orientation in the news has converged in Western media systems over time.

The second concept that is assumed to distinguish the reporting pattern in the three models is *objectivity*. Vos (2012: 436) argues that objective journalism refers to ‘an emphasis on verifiable facts, a factual arrangement of the news, reporting that accurately reflects events, impartial and balanced reporting and writing, a detached and impersonal point of view, and the separation of news and editorial functions of the news organization’. Objectivity is strongly rooted in the US context and distinguishes American journalism from a more interpretive European tradition (Donsbach, 1995). According to the US objectivity principle, journalists should report the news without commenting on it and present each side of a debate (Schudson, 2001: 150). Mancini (2000: 273) argues that it is far

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easier for Anglo-American journalists to exercise objectivity and political neutrality, because of the limitation of political choice arising from the two-party system. The prompt transmission of facts, expert sources, and eyewitness accounts became the cornerstone of the Anglo-American model (Williams, 2005: 63), and this new press used a straightforward language, separating newspapers from more elite political outlets (Mancini, 2005: 79). Journalists claim objectivity by citing procedures they follow which exemplify the formal attributes of a news story. Such strategies enhance the credibility of news stories and help journalists defend themselves against outside criticism. These formal attributes are presentation of conflicting possibilities; presentation of supporting facts that speak for themselves; use of quotation marks; story structure that follows an inverted pyramid; and the formal separation of facts and opinion (Tuchman, 1972: 665–70). We expect these professional routines to be used the least in newspapers from polarised pluralist systems because journalistic professionalism is weaker, training standards lower, and rational–legal authority less developed in these countries – all characteristics that should result in less respect for norms and standardised procedures of behaviours (Mancini, 2007b: 15). We expect political news coverage in democratic corporatist systems to be slightly less objective than in Anglo-American systems due to the historically strong political parallelism that has left some commentary-oriented journalism in Northern Europe. US newspapers will use these techniques most frequently because it fits the higher levels of market orientation and journalistic professionalisation. Second, we assume a rise in objective reporting from the 1960s to today because of the growing commercialised character of Western media systems, rising educational standards, and the diffusion of particular professional norms (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 272–3; Mancini, 2000: 268).

H 2.1: The use of professional routines demonstrating adherence to the ideal of objectivity is highest in US news stories and lowest in polarised Mediterranean news stories. Britain and France are borderline cases of their respective models.

H 2.2: Due to rising commercialisation, journalistic professionalisation, and the expanding recognition of objectivity as a key attribute of independent news, the level of objectivity has generally risen throughout Western media systems over time.

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The third theoretical criterion is *negativity*, meaning a preference for bad instead of good news. It often comes in the form of reports on problems, failings, confrontations, attacks, scandals, or political incompetence. Research has identified certain ‘drivers’ that help predict levels of negativity in the news. First, journalists may simply reflect a political culture in which political institutions enjoy low levels of public confidence, polarised conflicts over fundamental ideological questions are frequent, or where politicians attack each other regularly and stage controversy publicly in anticipation of its inherent news value. Second, a widely shared role perception of journalists being watchdogs of those holding political or economic power leads to a press coverage that keeps record of complaints, unresolved problems and misbehaviors. Third, because negative political news can be presented in dramatic, eye-catching and easy-to-understand ways it has an inherent appeal that may be exploited in commercially-oriented media environments. Fourth, over time journalism may have undergone a generational shift towards critical scrutiny of politicians’ motivations, exposing their strategies and blunders, and confronting each statement with a counterstatement by a known opponent. The desire to deconstruct politics is likely to be further enhanced by the presence of spin doctors and news management. The first driver is strong in the polarised pluralist systems whereas the other drivers are often associated with liberal systems. We therefore expect newspapers from the liberal systems to show the highest levels of negativity in the news, and the steepest increase over time. The newspapers from the polarised pluralist systems are expected to take a middle position and those from the consensus democracies of the corporatist model to rank lowest.

H 3.1: The level of negativity in the news is lower in the consensus-oriented democratic corporatist systems than in the Anglo-American or the Southern European systems.

H 3.2: Due to the spread of commercial pressures and critical professionalism the level of negativity in the news has increased through Western systems, with liberal systems showing the largest incline.

The three journalistic models should also diverge in terms of the access they grant to different *sources* in public discourse. Ferree and colleagues (2002: 86) use the term ‘standing’ to denote the voice given to actors in

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the news. Standing is not the same as just being mentioned; it refers to actors being quoted or paraphrased in a story. Citing sources from direct observers is considered as a way of verification of the news, and as a method of providing competing arguments (Dimitrova and Strömbäck, 2009). Drawing on Wessler (2008), we expect the following threefold pattern. First, due to greater state intervention and closer relationships between the media and the political field, we assume political elite actors from parties and the state to be more prominent in Southern European media systems than in the Anglo-American ones (Benson and Hallin 2007: 30; Ferree et al., 2002: 89). Second, we assume that organised social groups of the civil society (i.e. trade union representatives, social movements, interest groups, employer's associations, religious organisations) play the largest role in newspapers of democratic corporatist systems and the smallest in Anglo-American countries (Hallin and Mancini 2004: 74; Wessler 2008: 231). Third, individual sources like ordinary citizens or experts are expected to be most prominent in the US press because of a greater emphasis on individual freedoms and interests (Ferree et al., 2002: 98; Wessler, 2008: 231).

H 4.1: (a) The standing of 'political elite sources' in the news is highest in polarised Mediterranean news systems and lowest in the Anglo-American ones. (b) The standing of 'organised social group sources' is highest in the corporatist systems and lowest in the Anglo-American ones. (c) The standing of 'individual sources' is highest in Anglo-American ones.

H 4.2 (a) The standing of 'political elite sources' in the news has shrunk in all news systems (due to a differentiation from the political field and due to new technologies for gathering information that reduced the journalists' dependence on official sources). (b) The standing of 'individual sources' has increased (due to an emphasis on vivid storytelling in the use of citizen sources, and a growing 'scientification' of the discourse in the use of expert sources).

Method

To systematically examine developments in print media coverage of politics in different media systems, we conducted a quantitative content analysis

of 18 news outlets over a time span of five decades. The relevant details can be seen from Table 10.1. The USA, Britain, Germany, Switzerland, France, and Italy are selected to ensure that two countries from each of the three media system models developed by Hallin and Mancini are covered. The study examines randomly chosen routine phases of political affairs coverage from the years 1960–1 and 2006–7 to allow for long-time comparison. The early 1960s are commonly defined as the golden period of political press coverage characterised by large audiences and growing budgets whereas the late 2000s are marked by increasing global, digital, and commercial competition (see Tunstall, 1996, 2008).

From each of the six countries, we considered news outlets from three different print media sectors: national newspapers, regional newspapers, and weeklies. In each country we aimed for a national quality newspaper that serves as agenda setter, a regional paper to account for the regional structure of the press market, and a widely read and influential weekly.

Table 10.1 Selection of news outlets

<i>Models</i>	<i>Countries</i>	<i>News outlets</i>	<i>No. of articles</i>	
			<i>1960s</i>	<i>2000s</i>
<i>Liberal</i>	United States (USA)	<i>New York Times</i>	130	88
		<i>St Louis Post-Dispatch</i>	101	86
		<i>Time Magazine</i>	50	41
	Great Britain (GBR)	<i>The Times</i>	124	65
		<i>Birmingham Mail</i>	79	44
		<i>The Observer</i>	114	67
<i>Corporatist Germanic</i>	Germany (GER)	<i>Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung</i>	120	193
		<i>Rheinische Post</i>	142	147
		<i>Spiegel</i>	30	50
	Switzerland (SUI)	<i>Neue Zürcher Zeitung</i>	59	96
		<i>Berner Zeitung</i>	49	112
		<i>Weltwoche</i>	48	51
<i>Polarised Mediterranean</i>	France (FRA)	<i>Le Monde</i>	76	128
		<i>Ouest France</i>	89	74
		<i>L'Express</i>	31	87
	Italy (ITA)	<i>Corriere della Sera</i>	60	231
		<i>Resto del Carlino</i>	57	154
		<i>Espresso</i>	46	93

Sample N=3,212 articles.

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The peculiar British press market does not fit these selection criteria well. We opted for a regional tabloid that was exceptionally strong in the first half of our study period but which has subsequently come under massive pressure (like the great majority of British regionals); and we opted for a Sunday paper because the unusually strong British Sunday market has prevented news magazines (in the tradition of *Time*, *Spiegel*, and *L'Express*) from gaining a foothold.

We analysed two 24-month periods (1960–1 and 2006–7). From every second month of these periods we selected a randomly chosen issue of each newspaper and analysed all articles that contained political actors and were either printed or mentioned on the front page – irrespective of whether they offered news, commentary, or interviews. The focus on the front page ensures that all the articles considered most important by editors and most likely to be noticed by readers are included in the analysis (Strömbäck and Dimitrova, 2006).[1] For weeklies printed in magazine format the sampling procedure was adjusted to include (a) the cover story plus those articles linked to the cover story in the table of contents, (b) all other stories mentioned on the cover, and (c) all articles prominently highlighted in the table of contents. This procedure yielded a total of $n=3,212$ political articles. They constitute the universe of this study (see Table 10.1).

Our data analysis is guided by our hypotheses, and the relevant concepts were operationalised as follows:

Opinion-orientation: Drawing on Benson's and Hallin's (2007) study we coded each article with respect to its main journalistic function and included the following revised categories: 'straight news' (descriptive, concise); 'long news with background' (providing context); 'interpretation and analysis' (explanation, speculation); 'opinionated stories' (formal commentaries or information pieces mixed with opinion); or 'interviews'. Here we are only interested in the category of 'opinionated stories' which captures editorials, personal columns, commentary, and other types of story that heavily mix information with subjective assessments and evaluations.

Objectivity: Drawing on Tuchman (1972) we measured objectivity as a professional strategy that guides reporters on how to write a story that will be recognised as objective. We adopted her criteria, revised them slightly, and coded them as dichotomous variables at the story level: the presentation of opposing 'pros and cons' viewpoints; the use of 'expert sources'; the use of 'direct quotations and indirect speech'; and a 'hard-

facts-first structure'. Based on how often these four indicators were coded in stories from the six countries, we created an aggregate objectivity index for each story that sums up the four dichotomous sub-variables and ranges (based on a standardised formula) from 0 to 1.[2] For simplicity we will only report the aggregate indices in our analysis.

Negativity: We operationalised negativity by four sub-variables. First, we coded 'negative tone' if the tonality in a news report is pessimistic (for instance by referring to threats, risks, undesirable trends, antagonism, gloom). Second, we coded whether a 'conflict frame' was imposed on a story (for instance by zooming in on disputes and disagreements between political actors). Third, we coded 'political incompetence' if a story centres on political weaknesses and failings or displays scepticism toward the capabilities of a political actor. Fourth, we coded 'political scandals' if a story reports intense public communication about a real or imagined defect or misbehaviour in politics that provokes widespread indignation or outrage. As before, we constructed a standardised aggregate index from these four indicators that ranges (based on the same mathematical formula) from 0 to 1.

Use of sources: Sources are actors in a news story who are quoted with direct or indirect speech. Our coding categories are based on a typology developed by Benson and Hallin (2007) to which we added some minor modifications. To rate the prominence of 'political elites' in the news we measured quotations and paraphrases of the executive, legislative, and judiciary. To determine the salience of 'organised social groups' from civil society we coded the presence of trade union representatives, social movement or interest groups, employer's associations, and religious organisations. Finally, we measured the use of 'individual sources' in the form of quotes or paraphrases from ordinary citizens or experts.[3]

Results

News organisations are embedded – or institutionalised – in national environments that shape the practices within those organisations. Institutionalisation occurs through processes that are influenced by the political economy of the national media markets, national policy styles and regulatory approaches, and national reception prisms that audiences use to process political news as relevant. These and other forces have a socialisation effect on journalists that lead them to report the news in ways

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that are at least partially country specific. This means that the nation is a still meaningful framework for comparative analysis (see Donsbach and Patterson, 2004; Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Hanitzsch, 2011; Weaver, 1998) and a nationally-comparative approach is adopted here as well.

Opinion orientation: Hypothesis 1.1 presumes the degree of opinion-orientation (either in the form of clearly labelled commentaries or stories mixing information and opinion) to be lowest in news outlets embedded in the US press system and highest in outlets from polarised Mediterranean systems. As can be seen from Figure 10.1, the news coverage of the 1960s clearly supports Hypothesis 1.1. However, by the late 2000s the distinctions between the journalistic styles have become blurred and the use of opinion-oriented story types in the different press systems has become more similar.^[4] Still, and as expected by our discussion of the journalism models, the frequency of opinionated news remains lowest in the US press throughout the entire period under investigation. In the 1960s, French and

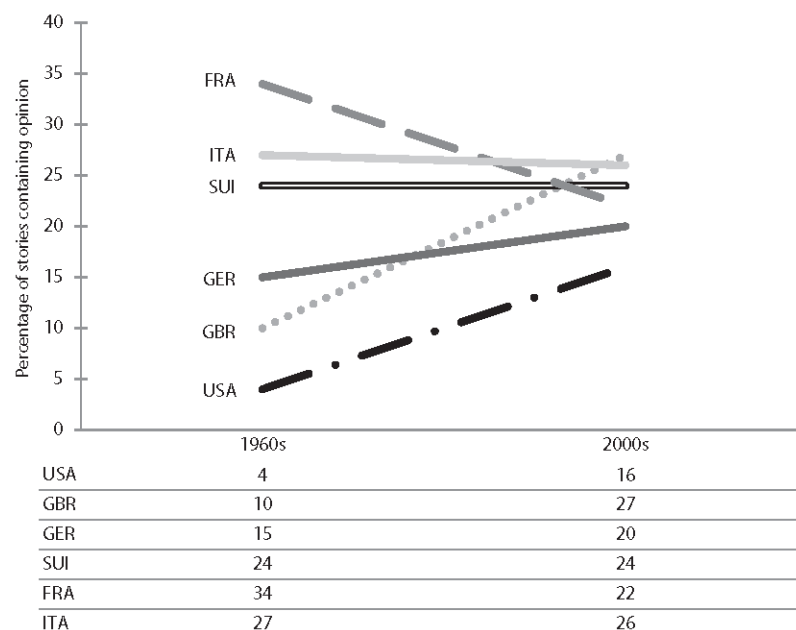


Figure shows proportion of stories coded as either 'commentary' or 'stories mixing information with opinion.' Not depicted are the other story types 'straight news', 'long background news', 'analysis and interpretation', 'interview'. Based on N=3,212 stories.

Figure 10.1 Use of opinion in political coverage

Italian newspapers do share a great fondness for opinionated journalism which clearly seems to reflect the partisan tradition of polarised pluralist systems. It also supports the results of an earlier comparative content analysis by Benson and Hallin (2007: 37) which found a higher inclination for opinion in French than US papers. This can be explained by commentary being traditionally the most celebrated form of writing in French news journalism (Chalaby, 1996: 315).

Hypothesis 1.2 expects the degree of opinion-orientation to converge in Western press systems. This is also clearly supported by our results. The US and particularly the British press have significantly increased their use of opinion oriented stories and become more European in this regard. The French press, on the other hand, has significantly scaled back their preference for opinion, presumably under the influence of global diffusion of professional values and transnational coorientation in the news media business. These findings also offer tentative support for our suspicion that Great Britain and France are borderline case of their respective models.

Objectivity: Hypothesis 2.1 predicts that features associated with the strategic rituals of objectivity will be most visible in US news reports and least visible in Mediterranean stories, and it expects to find support for classifying Great Britain and France as mixed cases. These assumptions are supported by the results reported in Figure 10.2. Objectivity-related news practices are most prevalent in US papers and least so in French and Italian papers, although some interesting qualifications apply. First of all, British and French newspapers confirm their status as borderline cases that make them hard to classify. This is particularly true for the British press which has removed itself from the US understanding of objectivity considerably and makes the notion of an Anglo-American model of journalism (as championed by Chalaby, 1996) increasingly hard to sustain. The German papers show, on the other hand, that they have internalised the lessons provided by American instructors after World War II and diligently integrated them in their in-house training programmes. At least that is what the data suggest. The Swiss-German papers studied show great affinity with the press in neighbouring Germany.

Proceeding to Hypothesis 2.2 we find also clear support for our expectation that from the 1960s to the 2000s the ideal of objectivity has been increasingly disseminated and recognised in the Western press. The use of objectivity-related news practices has not declined in any of the six systems but it is remarkable that throughout the entire period the

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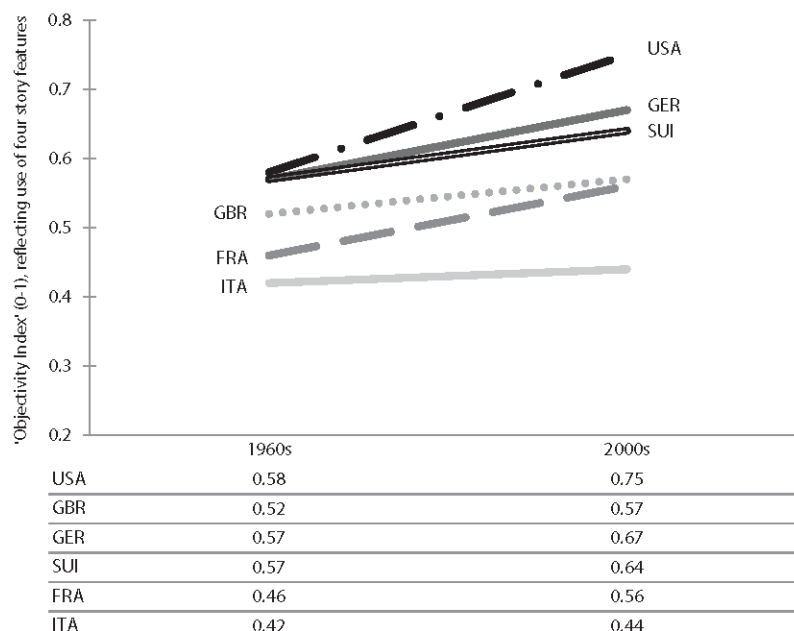


Figure shows average frequency of four elements in political stories: inclusion of opposing 'pros and cons' viewpoints; use of 'expert sources'; use of 'direct quotations and indirect speech'; a 'hard-facts-first structure' (aggregated to index; see method section). Based on N=3,009 stories.

Figure 10.2 Use of objectivity-related elements in political coverage

Italian press stays far behind in last place. The fact that objectivity-related reporting strategies have risen cross-nationally does not mean, however, that the press systems have become more similar to this effect – on the contrary: the gap between 'objective' and 'non-objective' news cultures has continued to grow.[5] In sum we can conclude that both our objectivity-related hypotheses have been confirmed.

Negativity: Our findings in Figure 10.3 illustrate that in the 1960s the levels of negativity in political news coverage varied significantly between the six press systems and that the levels of negativity have become even more dissimilar over time.[6] In the 1960s, the news stories in the consensus democracies of the democratic corporatist systems were the least negative, confirming our prediction in Hypothesis 3.1. However, counter to our expectations, we find that newspapers from the polarised pluralist systems report politics more negatively than newspapers from the

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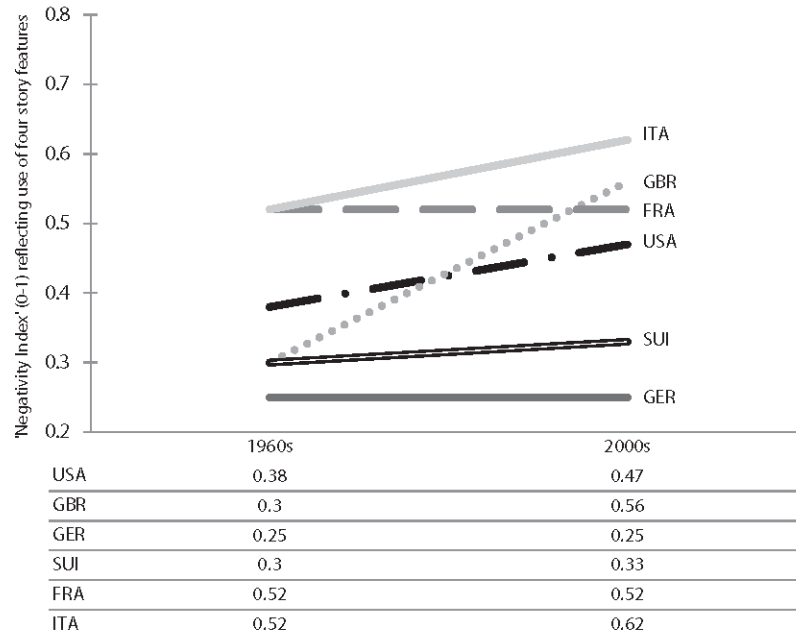


Figure shows average frequency of four elements in political stories: 'negative story tenor', 'conflict-oriented frame', 'incompetence frame', and 'scandalisation frame' (aggregated to index; see method section). Stories clearly relating to other countries than their own were excluded from this analysis. Based on N=1,626 stories.

Figure 10.3 Use of negativity in political coverage

liberal systems. We assumed the effects of commercialisation and critical professionalism in the Anglo-American systems would induce roughly similar levels of negativity to those produced by the effects of polarisation and inter-party contestation in the polarised systems. But it appears as if the effects of the political systems are stronger than those of the media system. We have no reason to believe that this somewhat surprising result is influenced by our methodology.[7] In fact, it is broadly in line with findings reported by Benson and Hallin (2007) and Benson (2010) who also describe French news reports as containing more critical coverage than US newspaper reports. This common finding seems to underscore that the high degree of ideological diversity in a multi-party system, the existence of anti-system political parties, and a tendency to question the legitimacy of political institutions fosters high values of negativity in the polarised model.

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Hypothesis 3.2 expects a growth in media negativity in all six press systems due to increased market-orientation, journalistic autonomy, and critical professionalism. However, this assumption is only partly supported. Negativity has risen significantly in the commercialised US and British press systems, particularly due to intensified coverage of 'political incompetence' and 'political scandals'. Despite a considerable boost in British and US papers, negativity is less intensive than in Italian newspapers which paint politics in fairly dark, pessimistic colours. This contrasts most conspicuously with the situation in Germany and Switzerland where the newspapers express a remarkably steady sobriety in their political coverage. In sum, the extremely diverse developments run contrary to the assumption of homogenising tendencies in terms of negativity.

News sources: US newspapers integrate a higher number of sources per article, measured as actors being either quoted or paraphrased in a news story, than newspapers of the other press systems (see Table 10.2). This result is consistent with Donsbach's (1995) finding that US journalists make much greater use of eyewitnesses, experts, spokespeople, and ordinary citizens as news sources than journalists in other Western systems.[8] The reliance on news sources increases strongly in most systems (with the exception of Italy) but so far the appreciation of source- and research-intensive reporting is still weaker at European than American papers.

Moving to a more in-depth analysis presented in Table 10.3 we observe a significant association between the six press systems and the variety of sources presented in the news.[9] Our prediction in Hypothesis 4.1(a) that 'political elite' sources are utilised more frequently in media systems shaped by greater state intervention and closer proximity of the political field is only weakly supported, because the French newspapers counter expectations by using them the least in the 2000s. In contrast, Italian newspapers show the highest preference for political elite sources, supporting our expectations.

Hypothesis 4.1(b) expects that 'organised social groups' from the civil society play the biggest role in the corporatist systems and the smallest role in the liberal systems. However, the use of organised social group sources does not differ substantially across systems. The data provide only limited support for the corporatism hypothesis as Swiss newspapers show indeed the highest amount of 'organised social groups' during the 1960s, whereas the German press does not integrate many organised sources. Meanwhile

Table 10.2 Frequency of news sources in political coverage

		<i>USA</i>	<i>GBR</i>	<i>GER</i>	<i>SUI</i>	<i>FRA</i>	<i>ITA</i>
Average number of sources per article	1960s	4.0 ^a	2.8 ^b	2.4 ^b	2.6 ^{ab}	3.2 ^{ab}	3.5 ^{ab}
	2000s	7.0 ^a	4.3 ^b	4.0 ^{bc}	3.4 ^c	4.4 ^b	3.4 ^c
Change		+ 3.0***	+ 1.5***	+ 1.6***	+ 0.8	+ 1.2**	– 0.1
Total N=1907 articles	1960s	193	122	169	13	94	74
	2000s	149	131	270	150	195	347

Table shows average frequency of directly or indirectly quoted sources. Based on N=1,907 stories; stories clearly relating to other countries than their own were excluded from this analysis. Means with different superscript letters are significantly different, means with the same superscript are not statistically different (1960s: post-hoc Dunnett's T3 test; 2000s: post-hoc LSD test) at $p < .05$ level). Differences between the 1960s and 2000s: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

the organised sources have come to be most common in Italian political news reports, thus disconfirming Hypothesis 4.1(b). Another study by Wessler (2008) also failed to establish a greater standing of organised groups in democratic corporatist news systems. We conclude that their greater de-facto significance in corporatist systems does not translate to greater media prominence – on the contrary, organised groups may prefer to conduct their lobby work from outside the media spotlight.

In an effort to address Hypotheses 4.1(a) and 4.2(b) from another angle we determined each story's topic profile with three basic categories: 'policy issues' (e.g., economy, security, education, social problems); 'political elites' (e.g., government, parties); and 'organised social groups' (e.g., trade unions, employer's associations, social movement groups, religious organisations). Space constraints prevent us from presenting detailed results, but the breakdown provides weak support for our hypothesis on political elites but no support for our hypothesis concerning attention to organised social groups in democratic corporatist systems. The relationship between these source groups and news coverage is obviously much less linear and direct than the theoretical model would lead us to believe.

Hypothesis 4.1(c) predicts that the standing of 'individuals' is greater in Anglo-American news outlets than in those from continental Europe. Again, the findings in Table 10.3 provide only limited support for this.

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Table 10.3 Types of sources in political coverage

(%)		<i>USA</i>	<i>GBR</i>	<i>GER</i>	<i>SUI</i>	<i>FRA</i>	<i>ITA</i>
Political elite ^a	1960s	62	57	59	61	58	74
	2000s	51	53	65	57	42	66
Individuals ^b	1960s	09	06	03	11	07	02
	2000s	18	09	11	13	22	04
Organised social groups ^c	1960s	07	11	07	14	07	07
	2000s	10	06	07	10	11	18
Media ^d	1960s	03	04	14	11	05	13
	2000s	03	02	03	05	04	04
Business	1960s	03	08	04	03	04	04
	2000s	04	04	06	05	09	04
Unnamed sources ^e	1960s	05	10	05	00	11	02
	2000s	02	19	03	03	05	02
Other sources	1960s	11	06	07	00	08	02
	2000s	12	08	05	08	07	03
Total %	1960s	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	2000s	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
Total N=7,352 of sources	1960s	(781)	(339)	(409)	(36)	(298)	(257)
	2000s	(1044)	(565)	(1080)	(512)	(864)	(1167)

Based on N=1,907 stories; items clearly relating to other countries than the own were excluded from this analysis. Totals can be different from 100% due to rounding. Most stories were coded for multiple number of sources (e.g., if two trade unions were quoted both were counted as organised social groups). Percentages are based on all sources mentioned in one national system.

- a. President and prime minister, cabinet members, other government officials, legislators, political party officials; judiciary.
- b. Ordinary citizens, experts.
- c. Trade unions, employer's associations, religious organisations, social movement groups.
- d. Journalists and other media, news agencies.
- e. Undisclosed and unidentifiable sources.

Individual sources are represented prominently in the US, but relatively infrequently in the British press. Contrary to our expectations, the French papers focus quite intensively on individual sources and differ clearly from Italian news practices. Nonetheless, there is one common conclusion that can be drawn from the sourcing patterns in the Mediterranean systems: Polarised, fragmented multi-party systems increase the likelihood of a broad range of voices entering the news arena: In times of controversy the

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French journalists may invite reactions from notables, public intellectuals, and spokespeople ('individuals') while in Italy organised groups from outside the established party system seize every news opportunity (including unions, protest groups, and the church).

Hypothesis 4.2(a) is supported as the standing of political elite sources in the news has receded in all systems except Germany. Hypothesis 4.2(b) is also supported as the standing of individual sources in the news has increased in all systems. This can be attributed to a more popularised reporting style that values personal narratives, or to a growing scientification of the political discourse that integrates specialist knowledge from experts.

Conclusion

This study is informed by two theoretical perspectives on long-term development in political journalism: one focuses on those forces pushing for the convergence of systems and homogenisation of news practices and content; the other focuses on deep-seated differences in structures and cultures that serve as brakes on this path and ensure that original contours of models are preserved over time. Focusing on the situation in Western press systems, we started by outlining the three most elaborate models found in the comparative literature so far, namely those developed by Hallin and Mancini, and derived a set of hypotheses on how differences in press *systems* (and change over time) may play out in news *content*. Here our study makes a clear contribution to a better understanding of these models as the content-specific, discursive elements have so far received little attention in comparative media systems research. The theoretically grounded indicators used to examine system-related differences in reporting styles are opinion orientation, objectivity, negativity, and sourcing patterns. To further examine whether we find more support for a convergence or maintenance of models we employed a longitudinal design comparing print outlets from six Western systems (USA, GBR, GER, SUI, FRA, ITA) in 1960–1 and 2006–7. While we find clear convergence in the preference for opinionated stories in covering politics, the use of objectivity-related and negativity-related reporting features continues to differentiate journalism models more or less according to our theoretical expectations.

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With regard to opinion orientation, the emerging shared tendency of Western newspapers to devote about one quarter of their top political stories to opinionated journalism may be explained by a gradual blending of European influences (with a high appreciation for commentary) and American influences (with a growing appreciation for interpretation). Objectivity is a reporting convention that originates in the US but is increasingly gaining traction in democratic corporatist systems. At the same time, it is gradually separating US and British newspaper journalism, making the myth of a coherent Anglo-American ideal less and less sustainable. In fact, British newspapers seem to be aligning more and more with French and Italian papers in their use of opinion, objectivity, and negativity. The US, on the other hand, stands out as a press system that values opinion the least and the use of sources and other objectivity-related story elements the most. For all Western systems it is noteworthy that the growing use of objectivity and opinion developed in parallel without mutually excluding each other. This points to a potentially more complex and hybrid style of political coverage, a style that is not necessarily detrimental to democracy.

Negativity is highest in those systems that are marked by high levels of political polarisation (ITA, FRA) and/or high levels of media commercialisation (USA, GBR). Further analyses will be needed to draw new groupings of press systems based on their reporting patterns. One area calling for further research is the use of sources, where the patterns found here are only partly reconcilable with our theoretical expectations. Contrary to what Hallin's and Mancini's term 'corporatist media system' leads one to expect, our analysis provides no evidence that corporatist groups play significantly larger roles in German and Swiss public discourse than in other media systems. Also, the idea that presumably more individualistic 'liberal' systems grant more media attention to individuals turns out to be unfounded.

We conclude that political reporting practices cannot be integrated without contradiction into existing media systems typologies. System differences do not map directly on to differences in how journalists cover politics. However, we are able to confirm several expectations derived from the work by Hallin and Mancini, including their suspicion that France and Great Britain are borderline cases. While both the liberal and the polarised pluralist systems lose internal consistency over time, our analysis reveals a remarkable similarity and stability of the reporting patterns at German and Swiss newspapers. We can also conclude that similar technological

and economic changes around the world as well as growing transnational exchanges between the national models have not led to an across-the-board, wholesale homogenisation of news practices. This only further underlines the relevance of comparative research. The arguably most important implication our conclusions have for comparative research is that the institutional aspects of media systems should not be expected to be directly reflected in content. While systemic contexts influence news production, journalism remains an autonomous force that is operated as much by internal values of the profession ('agency') as it is constrained by the outside environment ('structure').

Acknowledgement

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Notes

- 1 A necessary adaptation concerned the front page of *The Times* which in 1960–1 was reserved for advertisements and obituaries; in those years we coded political articles from the inside pages (only those half a page or larger, or accompanied by a picture or a very bold headline; N=124).
- 2 To standardise the aggregate objectivity index, the following formula was applied: $(x_i - \min_{[th]}) / (\max_{[th]} - \min_{[th]})$; x_i refers to the empirical value of the aggregate objectivity index x , $\min[th]$ to the minimal theoretical value of the aggregate index (here 0), and $\max[th]$ to the maximal theoretical value (here 4).
- 3 All news articles were analysed by international student coders who received extensive training prior to coding. Inter-coder reliability tests were calculated separately for all language groups. Average Cohen's *kappa* coefficients within each language group were 0.81–1.0 for all format-based variables and 0.61–0.80 for all content-based variables.
- 4 The visual message of Figure 10.1 is also statistically confirmed by univariate analyses of variance which found highly significant differences in country means for the 1960s ($F(5, 1399) = 21.94, p < .001, R^2\text{-adj.} = .069$) and much less robust – albeit still significant – differences for the 2000s ($F(5, 1801) =$

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2.53, $p < .05$, $R^2\text{-adj.} = .004$). The decrease in cross-national variance is clearly expressed in the R^2 values.

- 5 This can be demonstrated statistically by way of another univariate analysis of variance. It finds much stronger differences across the six nations' objectivity indices in the 2000s ($F(5, 1686) = 63.88$, $p < .001$, $R^2\text{-adj.} = .157$) than in the 1960s ($F(5, 1311) = 14.32$, $p < .001$, $R^2\text{-adj.} = .048$) as expressed by the R^2 values.
- 6 The divergence of the 1960s ($F(5, 547) = 9.65$, $p < .001$, $R^2\text{-adj.} = .073$) was surpassed by the divergence of the 2000s ($F(5, 1067) = 37.37$, $p < .001$, $R^2\text{-adj.} = .145$) as expressed in the R^2 values of two analyses of variance.
- 7 To prevent historic events from distorting our data we worked with extended 24-month data-gathering periods in the 1960s and 2000s. While 'negative' events may have taken place on the days of our analysis, coders were instructed to assess the *presentational style* of the stories and not the inherent quality of the underlying events.
- 8 The mean averages reported in Table 10.2 differ significantly between the six countries, both in the 1960s ($F(5, 659) = 5.46$, $p < .001$, $R^2\text{-adj.} = .033$) and in the 2000s ($F(5, 1236) = 21.26$, $p < .001$, $R^2\text{-adj.} = .075$).
- 9 This association for the 1960s is $\chi^2 = 98$, $df = 35$, $p < .001$; for the 2000s it is $\chi^2 = 345$, $df = 35$, $p < .001$.

Appendix C3: Publication III

Bibliography:

Esser, Frank & Umbricht, Andrea (2014). The Evolution of Objective and Interpretative Journalism in the Western Press. Comparing Six News Systems since the 1960s. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 91(2), 229–249. doi: 10.1177/1077699014527459

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Abstract

A content analysis of 2,422 political news stories from national and regional newspapers examines the different ways in which the *hard-news paradigm* has been adopted in the United States, Great Britain, Germany, Switzerland, France, and Italy between the 1960s and 2000s. The study traces how hard news practices diffused differently across borders, and how they have been combined with elements of interpretation and opinion over time. This process has led to the formation of three distinct news cultures. Conclusions are drawn for a broader understanding of the evolution of news journalism and the appropriate classification of Western media systems.

Keywords

political news, international journalism, comparative media systems research, professionalism, objectivity, interpretative journalism, quantitative content analysis

In a rare case of comparative journalism research, the authors of *The Diffusion of the News Paradigm, 1850-2000*¹ argued that while different approaches to news-making emerged in the history of Western journalism, the first fully developed model was that of the “new American journalism.”² It put the pursuit of objectivity at its center. The authors showed how at the beginning of the twentieth century the ideal of a facts-oriented, evidence-based reporting style spread from the United States to the

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European continent. However, the process required two conditions to be fulfilled: a substantial market for newspapers and a democratic political system. Even in European countries where these conditions were met, the new journalistic style was not simply passively absorbed, but was reshaped and adjusted according to local customs and deep-rooted traditions. Where both pre-conditions were not met, as in the southern European systems, the diffusion process was delayed and in some cases is not complete to this date. It could be said that each press system has embarked on its own path of development, and national conditions posed either favorable or unfavorable opportunity structures for implementing the hard-news paradigm of objective journalism.

The purpose of this study is to investigate how the earlier development of the hard-news paradigm has led to a more widespread use of objective reporting elements in the United States than the European press. Given the importance of contextual conditions, the paradigm should not have been adopted equally fast and comprehensively in all European press systems. Therefore, the study considers the relevant factors for this diffusion process from a comparative cross-national perspective. A second purpose of this study is to examine how the objectivity paradigm has changed within Western press systems. Consequently, the study also adopts a cross-temporal perspective and considers those elements that have led to an expansion of the news paradigm since the 1960s. Based on a systematic, hypotheses-led content analysis of newspapers from six countries across five decades, we conclude with a discussion of what the changes toward a more interpretative, opinionated journalism mean for specifying different types of Western news cultures. We conclude that the content-based concept of news cultures should be incorporated in institutional frameworks of media systems to gain a more comprehensive understanding of cross-national differences in journalism.

The Hard-News Paradigm in a Cross-National Perspective

We borrow the notion of news paradigm from Høyer.³ Whereas he uses it to describe the generalized concept of news as such, we apply it here to the more particular genre of “hard” news. “Paradigm” refers to a shared mind-set among members of a community about the nature of a core matter, its basic properties, and the shared preconceptions and practices guiding the collection of evidence related to this core matter.⁴ A shared mind-set in the journalism profession about the core meaning of hard news first emerged in the United States. Its basic properties have been aptly described in Mindich’s study, “Just the facts—How objectivity came to define American journalism.”⁵ This work and other relevant contributions⁶ lead us to the following definition:

The properties and practices of the *hard-news paradigm* include inverted pyramid writing, balanced reporting, emphasis on verifiable facts and attributed sources, a detached point of view, and the separation of the news and editorial functions of the news organization.

The many institutional and cultural conditions that led to an earlier emergence of the *hard-news paradigm* in the United States than in Europe include (a) the more limited partisan choices of the U.S. two-party system and the diminishing partisanship following the Progressive movement, (b) an early understanding that professionalization is tied to rationality and procedural fairness, (c) an early belief in scientific ideals and empiricism, (d) an aspiration among U.S. journalists to protect their collective integrity from the public relations industry, (e) a desire to distinguish themselves also from publishers and their favored parties, and (f) a self-perception that journalism is related to fact-digging reportorial work and not, as in some European countries, to the circles of “high literary creators and cosmopolitan political thinkers.”⁷

Chalaby draws many parallels between the development in the United States and Great Britain,⁸ but this view is contested. Schudson argues that the British case is “a kind of halfway house between American professionalism and continental traditions of party-governed journalism with high literary aspirations.”⁹ Although the British press has always subscribed to facticity and fairness, it never fully embraced the U.S. ideal of opinion-less objectivity. Many British papers never saw a contradiction between pursuing accurate facts and using them for campaigning journalism; other components of the *hard-news paradigm* were only observed to the degree necessary to retain credibility and success in the market and to keep the state from regulating their business.¹⁰ While American journalists tend to see non-partisanship as the highest professional value, the British prefer media sovereignty, and both sides continue to quarrel about how much advocacy journalism is acceptable.¹¹ The *hard-news paradigm* has been fully embraced at Reuters and the BBC, but only partly by the press. This lets us characterize Britain as a mixed type combining Anglo-American and European traditions.

Advocacy and partisanship have long been considered key components of news writing in the continental European systems. Nevertheless, it is well established that many of these systems “progressively imported and adapted the methods of Anglo-American journalism”¹² through training programs and textbooks, as well as through international news agencies and role-model news leaders like the *New York Times* or *Time* magazine. The Americanization of European newsrooms since 1945 has been facilitated and reinforced by simultaneous processes of democratization, commercialization, and technological development. However, there are structural and cultural conditions that have to be taken into account when investigating different adaptation and transformation strategies with regard to the objectivity-based hard-news paradigm. Depending on the different conditions, the literature basically distinguishes two models of journalism in Europe: the Polarized Pluralist model of the southern press systems and the Corporatist model of the northern press systems.¹³

The Polarized Pluralist model developed in the Mediterranean media systems of southern Europe where newspapers’ reliance on state subsidies is traditionally high and ties to political parties close. These characteristics—combined with a literary writing style that favors commentary and intellectual essays over shoe-leather reporting—are less than ideal pre-conditions for adopting core components of the *hard-news*

paradigm. On the other hand, it is more likely for southern European papers to prominently feature commentary in their pages than it is for U.S. newspapers. Of the two most studied polarized systems, Italy and France, the research literature indicates that the Italian press is even further removed from the hard-news paradigm than the French;¹⁴ French media show lower levels of political instrumentalization and higher levels of rational-legal authority, making their approach to news more rational than in Italy.¹⁵

The Corporatist model of journalism as practiced in northern European media systems is known for combining a diminishing tradition of press partisanship and a legacy of commentary-oriented journalism with a growing emphasis on neutral professionalism and information-oriented journalism.¹⁶ Typical representatives of corporatism are Switzerland and Germany. They occupy an intermediate position between the Anglo-American and Polarized Pluralist models. Unlike Italian journalists who were rather unwilling to adopt the Anglo-American news style,¹⁷ German journalists were more receptive to the lessons of the American and British press coaches during re-education.¹⁸ Nonetheless, it has remained an open question to what degree the diffusion of the *hard-news paradigm* has led to a convergence of Western journalism, and to what degree tradition-bound alterations and extensions even sharpened the contours of the different journalism models.

The Hard-News Paradigm in a Cross-Temporal Perspective

The hard-news paradigm came under attack in the 1960s and 1970s for favoring official elite sources and catering to established powers. Fact-centered and detached reporting seemed too limited an approach for exposing larger political dilemmas like McCarthyism or White House lies about Vietnam and Watergate. It led to calls to “blend” the *hard-news paradigm* with analytic and interpretative elements.¹⁹ This new “blended” approach retains from the hard-news paradigm a distance from political commitment but complements it with “reflexive knowledge” and “critical expertise” of the journalist.²⁰ This version of an *expanded* news paradigm would lead us to expect a more frequent mixture of news and analysis on the front page. There was also a second version of an *expanded* news paradigm discussed in the 1970s. This second scenario led observers to believe that a more interpretative and critical press “would eventually ally itself with a political faction and so become partisan.”²¹ The fear that a more interpretative style would ultimately lead to greater partisanship was referred to as “Europeanization” of U.S. journalism.²² In retrospect, this prediction was not entirely absurd. Today, Hallin sees strong evidence for it in “the re-emergence of partisan media in the United States,” above all, in cable news, talk radio, and the blogosphere.²³

In Europe, this expansion of the news paradigm did not go unnoticed, and the historical conditions for picking up these trends were favorable. In fact, the rise from a more descriptive to a more interpretative journalism is one of the most discussed long-term trends in the European and U.S. scholarly literature.²⁴ However, in the absence of any large-scale content analysis conducted across systems and time, our knowledge

about the dissemination and transformation of the news paradigm is still fragmented and does not allow for conclusive assessments. In particular, it is unclear whether any of these overtime developments have led to a harmonization of formerly divergent press styles.

Hypotheses

Our research design assumes that two explanatory conditions are responsible for characteristic differences in political news coverage. These are, on the one hand, the historical-institutional “contexts” of the press systems (cross-national perspective) and, on the other, the development over “time” and the related diffusion and adaptation processes (cross-temporal perspective). Consequently, we will organize the formulation of our hypotheses according to these two factors. Our analysis will investigate how context and time influence in symptomatic ways how the hard-news paradigm has been implemented, modified, and expanded.

The hard-news paradigm as it has evolved in its original form in the United States is defined by a set of operational practices that also meets important strategic needs of the profession:²⁵ they are easy to implement under time pressure, lend credibility to the news product and legitimacy to the profession as a whole, and they help protect members of the profession from charges of media bias. Hence, journalists have a vested interest in ensuring that the components of the hard-news paradigm are easily visible and identifiable in the news. It is also important to recognize that the paradigm’s strategic implications added to its appeal in other nations. To examine the extent to which the implementation of the paradigm differed in Western systems due to divergent opportunity structures, we will first investigate those components of the paradigm that convey facticity and balance: the use of hard-facts-first story structures, the use of direct and indirect quotes of those involved in an event, the use of detached expert sources, the balanced use of pros and cons, and the formal separation of facts and opinion.

Cross-national H1a: We expect the use of practices demonstrating adherence to the ideals of facticity and balance to be reflected most strongly in newspapers from the United States (followed by Britain and then Corporatist systems) and the least in newspapers from Polarized Mediterranean press systems (with Italy ranking behind France).

Cross-temporal H1b: Due to trans-border diffusion (assisted by democratization, commercialization, and professionalization), the use of these practices has grown throughout the Western press system over time.

Another component of the hard-news paradigm—an emphasis on verifiable facts and attributed sources—refers to the authenticity and transparency of news reporting. It dovetails with the ideal of a detached, evidence-based reporter. Because interviews with eyewitnesses play such a prominent role, we will measure authenticity and transparency by the amount of direct quotations and named sources.²⁶ In accordance with the rationale of **H1**, we expect the following:

Cross-national H2a: The use of direct quotations and attributed sources is highest in stories from U.S. newspapers and lowest in newspapers from Polarized Mediterranean press systems (traceable to lower levels of journalistic professionalization and rational-legal authority in those systems).

Cross-temporal H2b: Due to diffusion (and further assisted by rising training levels and a growing recognition of transparency to increase credibility), the use of these practices has grown throughout Western press systems over time.

The third hypothesis addresses the expansion of the news paradigm to incorporate elements of analysis and opinion. Because of the different journalistic traditions outlined earlier we expect the following:

Cross-national H3a: The proportion of “opinionated” stories is highest in newspapers from Polarized Mediterranean press systems and lowest in the U.S. newspapers; British papers and those from Corporatist systems take middle positions. Conversely, we expect the proportion of information-centered “news” stories to be highest in U.S. newspapers and lowest in papers from Polarized Mediterranean systems.

Cross-temporal H3b: Due to diffusion of the new ideal of “critical scrutiny,”²⁷ we expect “analysis” stories have become more widely used throughout Western newspapers over time. Furthermore, due to a diffusion of “European advocacy,”²⁸ the use of “opinionated stories” has risen significantly in U.S. newspapers until the present.

The transition of the hard-news paradigm lets us further assume that even if we focus only on that subset of stories classified as “news” (thereby excluding “analysis-centered” and “opinionated” stories), a shift has taken place toward more interpretative elements. This may include growing efforts by news reporters to address the “why” question and to place political events in a broader “context.”

H4: Over the course of time, the understanding of “news items” has changed throughout the Western press system to also include elements of analysis and contextualization.

Finally, we pose a research question with regard to a potential shift toward more interpretative content. Such a trend seems justifiable if it provides deeper meaning and explanation of political substance and issues (“policy”),²⁹ but it seems more disputable if it focuses merely on politicians’ strategies and tactical maneuvers (“process”).³⁰

RQ: Do interpretative stories relate more to aspects of “policy” or “process” in the various press systems?

Table 1. Sample of News Outlets.

Models	Countries	News outlets	No. of articles		Article length ^a	
			1960s	2000s	1960s	2000s
Anglo-American	USA	<i>New York Times</i>	130	88	679	1,123
		<i>St. Louis Post-Dispatch</i>	101	86	576	484
	GBR	<i>The Times</i>	124	64	675	586
		<i>Birmingham Mail</i>	79	44	120	268
Corporatist Germanic	GER	<i>Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung</i>	120	186	269	400
		<i>Rheinische Post</i>	141	143	160	189
	SWI	<i>Neue Zürcher Zeitung</i>	59	95	167	550
		<i>Berner Zeitung</i>	49	101	260	236
Polarized Mediterranean	FRA	<i>Le Monde</i>	74	124	577	643
		<i>Ouest France</i>	88	72	447	431
	ITA	<i>Corriere della Sera</i>	59	196	870	546
		<i>Resto del Carlino</i>	57	142	876	435

Note. Sample $N = 2,422$ articles. USA = The United States; GBR = Great Britain; GER = Germany; SWI = Switzerland; FRA = France; ITA = Italy.

^aMedian words per article.

Method

We conducted a quantitative content analysis of twelve news outlets from six press systems (see Table 1). The rationale was to include all those press systems that feature prominently in the literature on the diffusion of the news paradigm. We will refrain from squeezing the American and British press into one shared model and consider them separately. The German and Swiss press systems are good examples of what Hallin and Mancini have termed the Corporatist Model, at least the liberal variant of it, and France and Italy are prototypical representatives of the Polarized Mediterranean Model.³¹ Further specifications and restrictions will be considered where relevant. We begin our examination in the early 1960s, an era of high professionalism in U.S. journalism and intense diffusion of U.S. principles through Western press systems.³²

We sampled political news stories from two news outlets—a national and regional newspaper—per country in the years 1960/1961 and 2006/2007. In the United States, we selected the *New York Times* (a national newspaper of record) and the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (a large independent regional newspaper founded by Joseph Pulitzer). We decided in favor of regional and against tabloid newspapers because with the exception of Great Britain all other press markets have historically been shaped more by regional than tabloid newspapers. In Britain, we selected the *Birmingham Mail*,

which used to be the largest regional tabloid paper until its decline began in the 1990s, mirroring the general descent of the British regional press.

We categorized as “political” all news stories that discussed the actions of at least one regional, national, or international political actor or political institution. In every second month of the two periods under study (1960/1961 and 2006/2007), one random issue of each news outlet was examined. In line with common practice in cross-temporally and cross-spatially comparative news research,³³ we treated the front page as the main locus for observing prevalent practices of national news culture. Hence, in the selected issues, all political articles starting on the front page (including those continued on inside pages), *plus* all those stories whose headlines are listed on the front page (but actually published on inside pages) were included in the analysis.³⁴ The goal was to identify those articles that are given the greatest prominence and have maximum potential to reach a large audience. This procedure yielded a total of 2,422 news items (see Table 1), which form the universe of our analysis.

Bilingual coders were trained intensively and supervised closely throughout the content analysis. We made every effort to observe the principles for conducting cross-national content analyses as laid out by Rössler.³⁵ Training included detailed discussions of individual articles, cultural references, key concepts, and operationalizations. Successive intercoder reliability tests were run for all language groups, based on the coding of at least thirty articles. We used Cohen’s *kappa* as a rather conservative measure that gives credit only to agreement beyond chance. The average (Cohen’s *kappa*) coefficients were calculated separately for all language groups (English, French, German, Italian) and separately for format-based story elements (e.g., placement, story genre) and content-based elements (e.g., style elements, frames). Landis and Koch characterize values between .61 and .80 as substantial and between .81 and 1.0 as almost perfect agreement.³⁶ For all format-based variables, the average level of agreement was in the “almost perfect” range (.83-.91) and for the content-based variables in the “substantial” range (.62-.70) in the four language groups. These values are in line with *kappa*-tests reported in other cross-nationally comparative content analyses.³⁷

Results

For all subsequent analyses, we combine both newspapers per press system to one aggregate indicator of national reporting style. We have a theoretical and empirical reason for this. Theoretically, we follow neo-institutionalist arguments that treat individual news outlets as components of one collective transorganizational field that within each society follow similar norms and practices due to historically developed professional consensuses, intermedia co-orientation, embedding in the same political and economic system, and aligning products to the same national audience.³⁸ Empirically, a preliminary test (two-factorial analysis of variance) showed that for the following analyses, the effect sizes (partial eta squares) are greater between national press systems than newspaper types.³⁹

Table 2. Reporting Conventions in Pursuit of Facticity and Balance (means of dichotomous variables).

Inclusion of:	Periods	USA	GBR	GER	SWI	FRA	ITA
A hard-facts-first structure	1960/1961	.87	.90	.86	.91	.69	.72
	2006/2007	.78	.76	.79	.86	.71	.57
Direct and indirect speech	1960/1961	.91	.81	.68	.73	.68	.89
	2006/2007	.98	.88	.77	.87	.89	.85
Expert sources	1960/1961	.17	.15	.27	.36	.06	.01
	2006/2007	.59	.08	.33	.48	.19	.04
Pros and cons	1960/1961	.53	.45	.40	.53	.47	.29
	2006/2007	.86	.57	.80	.70	.46	.33
Separation of facts and opinion	1960/1961	.94	.96	.95	.86	.86	.66
	2006/2007	.82	.83	.97	.92	.83	.62
Index	1960/1961	.69 ^a	.66 ^{ab}	.65 ^b	.69 ^{ab}	.55 ^c	.52 ^c
	2006/2007	.81 ^a	.64 ^c	.73 ^b	.75 ^{ab}	.62 ^c	.50 ^d
Change in Index		+.12***	-.02	+.08***	+.06	+.07**	-.01
Total N = 2,226 articles	1960/1961	230	198	220	75	155	113
	2006/2007	172	106	309	138	188	322

Note. The mean scores of the standardized index range from 0 to 1. Means with different superscript letters are significantly different; means with the same superscript are not statistically different (post hoc LSD test [1960/1961 for equal group variances] and post hoc Dunnett's T3 test [2006/2007 for unequal group variances] at $p < .05$ level). Totals in row "Change in Index" can be different from the means of the Index due to rounding. Statistically significant differences between the 1960s and 2000s: if one of the five dichotomous sub-variables was missing in an article, the article in question was excluded from the Index (196 articles). USA = The United States; GBR = Great Britain; GER = Germany; SWI = Switzerland; FRA = France; ITA = Italy.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

H1: Facticity and Balance

The coding categories for examining **H1** draw on Tuchman's research on the strategic routines used by journalists when deciding how to write hard-news stories.⁴⁰ Five story attributes were coded as dichotomous variables: a "hard-facts-first structure" (instead of a literary or narrative story intro), the use of "direct and indirect speech" (to let sources drive the story and not reporters' preconceived ideas), the use of "experts" (to support evidence in an authoritative and detached way), the presentation of "pros and cons" (to give a balanced account of both sides), and the formal "separation of facts and opinion" (to help readers recognize news and commentary by using different presentational styles or other differentiating markers). Similar to Tuchman, we combine the indicators to a composite index that ranges from 0 to 1 (based on a standardized formula).⁴¹

As can be seen from the findings in Table 2, **H1a** was clearly supported. Papers from the United States make the greatest use of practices demonstrating adherence to the ideal of facticity, followed by those from Britain and the Corporatist press systems. On the other hand, papers from the Polarized Pluralist systems use them considerably

less—least often in Italy. Instead of fact-heavy introductions, stories in France and Italy use literary or narrative leads more often. Italian news coverage appears as the least balanced and the least inclined to separate news and opinion. **H1b** predicted an overtime increase in the use of facticity-related news practices but was only partly supported: the facticity indices rise for four of the six press systems—the United States, Germany, Switzerland, and France—between 1960/1961 and 2006/2007, but they decrease slightly for British and Italian papers (see Table 2). This decrease is mainly due to British and Italian papers having drastically reduced their use of hard-facts-first story structures and having softened the boundaries between news items and opinion items.

Interestingly, these long-term trends have not led to a convergence of facticity-related reporting conventions. To test this, we compared whether the summary indices reported in Table 2 differed more strongly in the 1960s or in the 2000s across the six systems. This can be demonstrated statistically by univariate analyses of variance which reveals that the differences grew over time, indicating greater cross-national variation (and thus the exact opposite of convergence).⁴² This means that despite growing trans-border diffusion and interconnectivity, newspapers in the six systems have not become more similar in their use of facticity-related news practices.

The overall picture confirms earlier survey results by Donsbach and Klett who found U.S. journalists to be the most and Italian journalists to be the least committed to objective news.⁴³ Our results show, however, a questionable shift under the surface at the U.S. papers: they demonstrate their objectivity increasingly through an excessive use of pundits (experts) and not through a hard-facts-first orientation or the separation of news and views. Findings in Table 2 also provide support to Mancini's characterization of the British press as being in important ways increasingly more European than American.⁴⁴

H2: Transparency and Authenticity

This brings us to reporting conventions in pursuit of transparency and authenticity. We operationalized transparency as the amount of direct quotations and authenticity as the amount of named or otherwise specified sources in an article (reported in percentages; see Table 3). Table 3 shows that in the 1960s, as expected, newspapers in the United States used direct quotes and specified sources more frequently than newspapers from the other systems. However, this is no longer true in the 2000s. Moreover, it is not newspapers of the Polarized Pluralist systems that use direct quotes the least but, surprisingly, papers of the Corporatist systems. Both findings contradict our expectations and lead us to dismiss **H2a**.

Overall, the use of transparency and authenticity-related practices has increased in most systems. The most notable exception is the United States, where newspapers since the 1960s have resorted more often to the use of unnamed sources (see Table 3). This lets us consider **H2b** only partly confirmed. Across all six systems, the use of direct quotations and unspecified sources again provided no clear indication of convergence—reporting styles have not grown more similar over time.⁴⁵

Table 3. Reporting Conventions in Pursuit of Authenticity and Transparency (in percent).

Periods		USA	GBR	GER	SWI	FRA	ITA
Total length of quotations in relation to total length of article	1960/1961	16 ^a	14 ^{abc}	5 ^d	8 ^{cd}	9 ^{bc}	15 ^{ab}
	2006/2007	16 ^b	21 ^{ab}	8 ^c	6 ^c	18 ^b	24 ^a
Change		0	+7 ^{**}	+3 ^{***}	-2	+8 ^{***}	+9 ^{***}
Total N = 2,422 articles	1960/1961	231	203	261	108	162	116
	2006/2007	174	108	329	196	196	338
Proportion of specified sources out of all sources in article	1960/1961	89 ^a	82 ^{ab}	82 ^{ab}	75 ^b	72 ^b	82 ^{ab}
	2006/2007	83 ^{bc}	78 ^{bc}	85 ^{ab}	75 ^c	83 ^{abc}	89 ^a
Change		-6 ^{**}	-4	+3	+1	+11 ^{**}	+8 ^{**}
Total N = 2,132 articles	1960/1961	228	172	201	85	139	104
	2006/2007	172	103	279	164	186	299

Note. Means with different superscript letters are significantly different; means with the same superscript are not statistically different (post hoc Dunnett's T3 test at $p < .05$ level). Totals in row "Change" can be different from the country indices due to rounding. Statistically significant differences between the 1960s and 2000s. USA = The United States; GBR = Great Britain; GER = Germany; SWI = Switzerland; FRA = France; ITA = Italy.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

We find two aspects particularly striking: The verbatim reproduction of statements by those at the center of political events—sources—has only limited value in German and Swiss press reporting. This seems a clear misunderstanding of the premises of the *hard-news paradigm*. However, it confirms previous studies that had discovered a disinclination, particularly among German reporters, to grant politicians greater opportunities to speak uninterruptedly on television news programs, thereby reflecting a tendency to value journalistic voice more than political voice.⁴⁶ The second intriguing aspect is that the casual use of unnamed sources ("an official said," "according to sources close to") seems to be practiced similarly across Western press systems—although slightly more often at British and Swiss papers. Follow-up studies may investigate this further because for normative reasons the use of unnamed sources should be limited to only those cases "of compelling public importance," or where it is required "to protect an innocent or wrongful party."⁴⁷ Overuse of anonymous sources, on the contrary, may undermine the credibility of the news media and the ethos of the *hard-news paradigm*.

H3: Preference for News, Interpretation, and Opinion

To examine H3 we coded each newspaper story for its main function. Developing further a classification originally suggested by Benson and Hallin,⁴⁸ we distinguish between "news items" (stories offering concise descriptions of events or—if longer—additional background information and broader circumstances), "information mixed with interpretation" (stories offering explanation, investigation or speculation about the motivations, tactics, and consequences of political events), "information mixed

Table 4. Type of Article (in percent).

Periods		USA	GBR	GER	SWI	FRA	ITA
News items	1960/1961	71	82	77	78	58	61
	2006/2007	54	69	65	64	64	40
Information	1960/1961	28	11	8	14	10	16
mixed with interpretation	2006/2007	36	16	14	15	13	32
Information mixed with opinion	1960/1961	0	5	2	5	11	8
	2006/2007	10	6	7	6	9	7
Commentaries	1960/1961	0	1	13	4	20	16
	2006/2007	1	10	13	15	13	21
Total N = 2,422 articles	1960/1961	(n = 231)	(n = 203)	(n = 261)	(n = 108)	(n = 162)	(n = 116)
	2006/2007	(n = 174)	(n = 108)	(n = 329)	(n = 196)	(n = 196)	(n = 338)

Note. Totals per decade can be different from 100% due to rounding. USA = The United States; GBR = Great Britain; GER = Germany; SWI = Switzerland; FRA = France; ITA = Italy.

with opinion” (stories offering peripheral commentary, opinionated perspectives, or subjective viewpoints despite not being marked as commentary), and “commentary” (editorials, leaders, opinion columns).⁴⁹

The results reported in Table 4 show a mixed pattern for **H3a**: Support is clear with regard to “opinionated” stories, but rather ambiguous with regard to “news” stories. A detailed look reveals that, as predicted by the different traditions, the largest share of opinionated stories in the 1960s appeared in newspapers from the Polarized Pluralist systems and the lowest share in U.S. papers: The combined score for “information mixed with opinion” and “commentaries” in 1960/1961 was 31% in the French and 23% in the Italian papers, but just 1% in the U.S. papers. Conversely, the French and Italian papers carried the smallest amount of “news” stories in the 1960s, which is all clearly in line with **H3a**. However, contrary to prediction the U.S. papers were surpassed in their emphasis on front page “news” by British, Swiss, and German papers in the 1960s—meaning that **H3a** can be considered only half-confirmed.

The expansion of the *hard-news paradigm* went in two directions: one toward “information mixed with interpretation” (reflecting U.S.-style critical scrutiny), and the other toward “information mixed with opinion” and “commentaries” (reflecting European-style advocacy). In line with **H3b**, the trend toward “information mixed with interpretation” has risen to the highest levels in the U.S. papers (to 36% in 2006/2007), thereby confirming a long-standing debate in the American research literature. The use of opinion, particularly “commentary,” has remained a hallmark of European newspaper journalism (see bottom row of Table 4). Interestingly, the U.S.-led trend toward critical professionalism has also spread in Europe, where stories “mixing information and interpretation” increased between 1960 and 2007, too (see Table 4). However, not only did European papers become more American (by the inclusion of interpretative journalism), but American newspapers have also become more European (by including elements of opinion). These indications of cross-fertilization can be regarded as further confirmation of **H3b**.

Table 5. Interpretative Elements within Pure News Stories (in percent).

Periods		USA	GBR	GER	SWI	FRA	ITA
Why-reporting	1960/1961	82 ^{ab}	68 ^{bc}	61 ^c	61 ^c	76 ^{ac}	86 ^a
	2006/2007	88 ^{ab}	85 ^{ac}	74 ^c	74 ^{bc}	93 ^a	85 ^{ac}
Change		+ 6	+ 17 ^{**}	+ 13 ^{**}	+ 13 [*]	+ 17 ^{***}	-1
Total N = 1,551 articles	1960/1961	165	167	202	84	94	71
	2006/2007	94	74	214	125	126	135
Contextual reporting	1960/1961	19 ^b	32 ^{ab}	24 ^b	23 ^b	29 ^b	52 ^a
	2006/2007	37 ^a	54 ^a	36 ^a	52 ^a	52 ^a	51 ^a
Change		+ 18 ^{**}	+ 22 ^{**}	+ 12 ^{**}	+ 29 ^{***}	+ 23 ^{**}	-1
Total N = 1,547 articles	1960/1961	165	166	201	84	94	71
	2006/2007	94	74	214	123	126	135

Note. This in-depth-analysis is confined to those N = 1,552 articles that were identified as “news items” in Table 4. Means with different superscript letters are significantly different; means with the same superscript are not statistically different (post hoc Dunnett’s T3 test at $p < .05$ level). Statistically significant differences between the 1960s and 2000s. USA = The United States; GBR = Great Britain; GER = Germany; SWI = Switzerland; FRA = France; ITA = Italy.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Interestingly, these transnational preferences for a more interpretative style reveal first traces of convergence. The differences in the use of “items mixing information and interpretation”, “items mixing information and opinion” and “commentaries” decreased between the 1960s and 2000s in all six systems, thereby making them more homogeneous.⁵⁰

H4: Spread of Interpretative Journalism

To demonstrate how the understanding of hard news has widened—and thereby potentially transformed Western journalism—we examined how the fabric of pure news stories has changed. Our previous analysis (reported in Table 4) showed how the use of “news items” had decreased to make room for other types of stories that allow journalists to add interpretation and opinion. Our next step of analysis focuses only on those stories that Table 4 identified as “news items.” Drawing on Barnhurst and Mutz’s concept of *event* versus *analysis-focus*,⁵¹ we examined each “news item” for whether it included indications as to *why* a political event happened, thereby addressing causes and interpretations. In addition, we examined each “news item” for whether it was framed in *contextualized* or *decontextualized* terms.⁵² Contextualized reporting refers to stories that place events in a broader framework, indicate possible consequences of occurrences and show connections to other events.

As can be seen from Table 5, even pure news items have become more interpretative over time. In addition to the classic questions of who, what, where, and when, news items in all Western press systems have increasingly come to address the *why* question as well (see upper part of Table 5). In addition, newspapers have come to *contextualize* their news reports with additional elements of analysis (lower part of

Table 6. Topical Focus of Interpretative Stories (in percent).

Periods		USA	GBR	GER	SWI	FRA	ITA
Process-related ^a	1960/1961	17	11	21	21	08	27
	2006/2007	21	33	29	26	20	38
Policy-related ^b	1960/1961	65	55	47	55	55	40
	2006/2007	56	50	39	44	54	31
Government-related ^c	1960/1961	7	21	18	15	29	27
	2006/2007	14	10	25	18	16	22
Other ^d	1960/1961	12	13	14	9	8	7
	2006/2007	9	8	7	13	11	9
Total N = 446 articles	1960/1961	(n = 64)	(n = 22)	(n = 21)	(n = 15)	(n = 17)	(n = 18)
	2006/2007	(n = 62)	(n = 17)	(n = 47)	(n = 29)	(n = 26)	(n = 108)

Note. This in-depth analysis is confined to those N = 446 articles that were identified as “items mixing information and interpretation” in Table 4. Totals can be different from 100% due to rounding.

Percentages are based on topics mentioned in stories; up to three topics per story were coded. USA = The United States; GBR = Great Britain; GER = Germany; SWI = Switzerland; FRA = France; ITA = Italy.

^aParties, Politicians, Elections, Polls, Media.

^bEconomy, Finance, Education, Justice, Science, Environment, Social Problems, Social Welfare, Political Corruption, Crime, Military, Terror, Diplomacy, War.

^cGovernment (individual representatives or collective actors).

^dUnions, Employers, Social Movements, Churches, Ethic Groups; Political Structures.

Table 5). The cross-national differences are small overall and have become even smaller over time.⁵³ This is the second indication that, with regard to interpretative journalism, we do find evidence of transnational convergence.

We conclude that the increasing expansion of the *hard-news paradigm* is not only reflected in the growing popularity of story genres that allow journalists to include opinion and interpretation in political affairs coverage (see Table 4), but is also reflected in a redefinition of classical, supposedly pure news items, which are becoming more analytical and contextual in their discursive composition (see Table 5). In sum, **H4** (more interpretation in news) is clearly supported for all press systems under study.

RQ: Topical Focus of Interpretative Journalism

To assess what to make of these trends and answer our research question, we took a more detailed look at which *topics* are primarily covered in interpretative style. We selected only those stories for this analysis that were identified in Table 4 as “items mixing information and interpretation.” We will further focus our attention particularly on those two press systems in which “items mixing information and interpretation” occur most frequently—the United States and Italy (see again Table 4).

This in-depth analysis reveals a decisive difference between the two countries as can be seen from Table 6: while the Italian newspapers primarily report “process”-related topics in interpretative style (e.g., the strategies and maneuvers of individual

government politicians and party politicians), the interpretative journalism in the U.S. newspapers also relates strongly to “policy”-related fields (examining substance in issue areas such as the military, justice, terrorism, social problems, economy). Interestingly, this difference remains clearly visible even when the very few election-related stories are removed from our sample.⁵⁴ Along with the United States, newspapers in most Western press systems devote interpretative reporting mostly to “policy” discussions—except for Italy (see Table 6).

Interpretative journalism that focuses mainly on aspects of “politics”—as is the case in Italian papers—has been criticized as an unnecessary departure from the *hard-news paradigm*.⁵⁵ If interpretative journalism mainly relates to “policy” areas, on the other hand, it potentially contributes to informed citizenry and, by implication, to democracy.⁵⁶ We conclude that interpretative journalism which explains complicated “policy” matters in ways that help broader publics to comprehend the world of politics is not only a defensible, but laudable, press practice.⁵⁷ However, it must be pointed out that over time “process”-centered interpretation has grown and “policy”-centered interpretation dropped in all six press systems under study (see Table 6), hence justifying concerns voiced by many scholars about a growing popularity of the wrong kind of interpretative news.

Conclusion

Cross-national research on the history of journalism has argued that the conception of *news* in Western press systems is the result of lengthy trans-border diffusion processes. Since its origination in the second half of the nineteenth century, the news paradigm has undergone various transformations both in how it was adopted across press systems and how its meaning evolved within press systems. The successful diffusion of the paradigm was subject to certain conditions—like longtime press freedom, liberal democracy, a substantial newspaper market with strong demand, openness toward Anglo-American press principles—and this context dependency explains why it had been adopted faster in some systems than in others. While no study has ever systematically explored this development in full, our own content analysis tries to make a modest attempt at tracing some of the aspects involved.

Based on a definition derived from the relevant research literature, we operationalized the hard-news paradigm as consisting of reporting conventions in the pursuit of facticity, balance, transparency, and authenticity. Over time, two components were added—interpretative analysis and expression of opinion—thereby reflecting a widening in the understanding of what kinds of elements fall under the rubric of news coverage.

This widening, as our study has indicated, occurred at two levels. First, Western newspapers experienced a substantial increase in so-called news analyses (stories mixing information and interpretation) and opinion-based stories (in the form of unequivocal commentaries or more subtle items blending information and opinion), while at the same time the share of traditional news items dropped remarkably. Second, the discursive composition of traditional news items has changed considerably over time.

In the 2000s, they have been geared much more toward analysis (answering why-questions) and contextualization of political events (addressing causes, consequences, connections). While our study may be the first to demonstrate this multilayered development for several press systems and decades, we have also sounded a cautious note on how to evaluate this trend. We have argued that a more interpretative news style is not bad per se and may even contribute to an enriched public sphere *as long as* it is applied more to covering “policy” than “process”—and we have identified only one press system (Italy) where this was not the case. However, our cross-temporal analysis has also shown that “process”-related interpretation is on the rise everywhere while “policy”-related interpretation is on the decline—a trend that warrants future attention.

Our comparison indicates further that the implementation of the news paradigm has developed differently across countries, and has undergone transformations within countries. If we bring together our study’s various findings in a way that allows us to draw broader conclusions about the underlying news cultures in these press systems, we recognize three distinct yet interrelated reporting styles (backed up by additional correspondence analyses not shown here for reasons of space).

What distinguishes *American* from continental European journalism is its distance to commentaries and other forms of opinion expression on the news pages. This was true in the 1960s and continues to be true in the 2000s. On the other hand, U.S. journalism, more than any other national reporting style, represents a preference for mixing information with interpretation. The U.S. style of interpretative journalism has special characteristics: it relies heavily on experts, direct quotations, and considerations of pros and cons. None of the European newspapers examined here was found in the immediate vicinity of this specific reporting style. It thereby represents a distinct, stand-alone realization of the news paradigm.

A second independent and peculiar realization of the paradigm is the *Italian* style. Of all press systems under study, it is furthest removed from the principles of facticity and balance. A hard-facts-first structure, separation of facts and opinion, the use of expert sources, and consideration of both sides remained rather extraneous elements in the reporting of Italian newspapers of the 1960s and the 2000s. On the other hand, political sources are quoted extensively, which could be interpreted as indicating a persistently strong press-party parallelism.

A third approach to implementing the news paradigm is found in the reporting style of the newspapers of the *Corporatist* systems; in fact, Swiss and German journalists seem to have come to a similar understanding of news-making. The Corporatist press systems are known for their characteristic coexistence of commentary and objectivity—an inclination clearly reflected in the content of their newspapers. Swiss and German papers seem to have attentively adopted many facticity-related principles of the hard-news paradigm, but they also display a marked aversion to direct quotes from sources. Instead, German and Swiss journalists prefer to take the lead in their stories themselves, thereby opening the door to opinion and analysis.

Finally, French journalism was situated between the Italian and the Corporatist style, both in the 1960s and 2000s. British journalism was placed between Corporatist

and American style in the 1960s and then moved to a middle position between the American and Italian style in the 2000s. It follows from this analysis that the *three* major reporting styles of the 1960s and the 2000s (American, Italian, Corporatist) could be described as a triangle that stayed fairly stable (with the exception of the British shift from an Anglo-Corporatist to an Anglo-Polarized style), but that the triangle drifted in its entirety more toward interpretative journalism as the decades passed by.

These findings complement in important ways a preliminary analysis by Esser and Umbricht.⁵⁸ Although the study at hand is limited to daily newspapers, it takes into account the long-term development from the 1960s to the 2000s and the gradual transformation of the objectivity ritual toward a more interpretative approach. More generally, our findings show that Hallin and Mancini's media system typology⁵⁹ may be a useful starting point for determining news cultures, but it represents by no means the end point. Reporting styles vary in more complex ways, which can only be discovered by careful content analysis. Hallin and Mancini have acknowledged this weakness in their own work and stated recently that "content analysis across systems, guided by comparative theory, is in our view one of the most fundamental needs in our field."⁶⁰

Because the historical adaptation of the news paradigm was so contingent on contextual factors, it led to what Høyer calls "hybrid" forms of journalism,⁶¹ in which old (tradition-bound) and new (border-transgressing) elements were freely mixed. These idiosyncratic mixtures explain the continued diversity of reporting styles in the press systems of Europe and North America, even though we observe certain indications of transnational homogeneity. It goes without saying that these trends are too complex to be addressed by a simple "Americanization" thesis. It is certainly true that U.S.-led reporting conventions in pursuit of facticity, balance, and critical professionalism have spread to many European systems. On the other hand, American newspapers have slowly moved along a more opinion-oriented trajectory that is more in line with the European tradition. In sum, all Western news systems have experienced a shift from journalists being observers to becoming more autonomous interpreters of politics. Changes in market dynamics, levels of education, and the status of the profession have contributed to this development. These cultural shifts have manifested themselves in changes of layout, whereby newspapers have been moving away from running shorter items on their front pages to making space for "new long journalism"⁶²—a style that contains a much richer discursive texture and whose evolution we have tried to trace across space and time.⁶³

Not only is this knowledge of historical relevance, but it also offers a baseline assessment for understanding contemporary differences in Western journalism, and facilitates the classification and interpretation of future trends of convergence and divergence in international multichannel news environments.

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42. Univariate analyses of variance found highly significant differences in country means for the 1960s ($F(5, 985) = 18.06, p < .001, R^2\text{-adj.} = .079$) and for the 2000s ($F(5, 1229) = 74.15, p < .001, R^2\text{-adj.} = .229$). The increase in cross-national divergence is clearly expressed in the R^2 values of two analyses of variance.
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45. The divergence for the use of direct quotations grew from the 1960s ($F(5, 1075) = 14.22, p < .001, R^2\text{-adj.} = .058$) to the 2000s ($F(5, 1335) = 53.93, p < .001, R^2\text{-adj.} = .165$), whereas for unspecified sources it slightly fell from the 1960s ($F(5, 923) = 6.61, p < .001, R^2\text{-adj.} = .029$) to the 2000s ($F(5, 1197) = 17.29, p < .001, R^2\text{-adj.} = .025$), as indicated by the R^2 values.
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50. Univariate analyses of variance ascertain smaller differences in the six nations' use of: “items mixing information and interpretation” in the 2000s ($F(5, 1335) = 2.71, p < .001, R^2\text{-adj.} = .067$) than in the 1960s ($F(5, 1075) = 4.80, p < .001, R^2\text{-adj.} = .090$); “items mixing information and opinion” in the 2000s ($F(5, 1335) = 0.74, p = .595$) than in the 1960s ($F(5, 1075) = 6.66, p < .001, R^2\text{-adj.} = .026$); and “commentaries” in the 2000s ($F(5, 1335) = 8.49, p < .001, R^2\text{-adj.} = .027$) than in the 1960s ($F(5, 1075) = 16.67, p < .001, R^2\text{-adj.} = .068$).
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53. Between the 1960s and 2000s the R^2 values for “why-reporting” receded from .036 ($F(5, 777) = 6.81, p < .001, R^2\text{-adj.} = .036$) to .032 ($F(5, 762) = 6.05, p < .001, R^2\text{-adj.} = .032$) and for “contextual reporting” from .034 ($F(5, 775) = 6.50, p < .001, R^2\text{-adj.} = .034$) to .016 ($F(5, 760) = 3.56, p < .01, R^2\text{-adj.} = .016$).
54. Our content analysis relies on random sampling outside the hot phases of national election campaigns. It is nevertheless useful to point out that the United States had elections in both 1960/1961 and 2006/2007 (Kennedy, mid-terms), whereas Italy had elections in 2006/2007 (Prodi) only. Of the remaining countries Germany had elections in 1960/1961, and France and Switzerland in 2006/2007. Britain held municipal elections in 2006/2007, which had relevance for Blair's much-discussed handover to Brown. Some of the stories in Table 6 relate to these events, albeit not many.
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61. Høyer, “The Idea of the Book,” 15.
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63. We find that newspaper stories grow in length over time (see Table 1), and that length correlates positively with the inclusion of interpretative elements (confirming results by Barnhurst and Mutz, “American Journalism and the Decline in Event-Centered Reporting”).

Appendix C4: Publication IV

Bibliography:

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The Push to Popularize Politics:

**Understanding the Audience-Friendly Packaging of Political News in Six Press Systems
since the 1960s**

Abstract

This study offers a five-item based measurement of popularization of news (combining sensationalism, scandalization, emotionalization, ordinary citizen approach and privatization of public figures) to examine a core assumption in the comparative literature, namely the convergence in Western journalism toward the Liberal Model. A content analysis of more than 6000 stories from 18 news outlets (regional, national and weekly papers) in six press systems (United States, Great Britain, Germany, Switzerland, France and Italy) stretching five decades (1960s to 2010s) finds an increase but no convergence in the popularization of political news. Factors located at the national and the organizational levels correspond in characteristic ways with differences in the use of popularization-related strategies. With the growing need to offer additional attractions to oversaturated consumers, further increases in popularized political news are to be expected in the future but only according to specific conditions.

The Push to Popularize News

One of the core assumptions in comparative journalism research states that *commercialization* has “encouraged the development of a globalized media culture that substantially diminishes national differences” (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, p. 282). It is argued that the market-driven “forces of homogenization” are strong, and “that considerable convergence has taken place” across western press systems, “primarily in the direction of the Liberal Model” (ibid.). Recent studies have shown that this shift toward the liberal journalism model – meaning the reporting style of U.S. and British news media – push political affairs coverage toward a softer, more entertainment-centered and audience-friendly approach (Aalberg & Curran, 2012). This move has been linked to further-reaching developments like the growing concentration, conglomeration and competition of media companies (Croteau & Hoynes, 2006), a shift from a traditional party democracy to an image-focused audience democracy (Manin, 1997) and a change toward consumer-oriented lifestyles that emphasize presentation, style, and aesthetics (Brants, 2007) – all of which pressurize even long-established media to sell their news in more accessible ways.

In their influential book *Comparing Media Systems*, Hallin and Mancini (2004) are fairly specific about the implications that a greater audience orientation has on Western journalism. It would streamline news content toward (1) more sensationalized and (2) more emotionalized information that can be consumed more readily; (3) more personalized portrayals of politicians that humanize them as leaders with an easy-to-relate private side; (4) a stronger focus on the experience and perspective of ordinary people and how they are affected by public issues; and (5) a more self-confident reporting style that emphasizes the power of the press by focusing on stories about political scandals, rivalries and self-interests (Hallin & Mancini, 2004, pp. 277–279).

One of the reasons why these trends (see also Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999; Franklin, 1997; Thompson, 2000) spread across borders is that newspapers feel tempted to imitate

profitable reporting techniques seen in other countries, in particular if papers are faced with similar challenges like declining circulation and growing competition from new communication channels. Growing co-orientation within the global news arena is thus assumed to contribute to a further homogenization of news practices (Reese, 2008). Other transnational processes like economic liberalization and political deregulation push newspapers in the same direction. These trends toward convergence are supported by pressures to increase efficiencies and to lower costs which promote structural convergence (reorganizing newsrooms) and journalistic convergence (redefining professional roles and skills; see Quinn, 2004). They have been connected to results of content analyses showing that European newspapers increasingly pursue “a more popular editorial profile” – albeit with important “differences between individual countries” (Weibull & Nilsson, 2010, p. 65). Despite all the plausibility of a converging trend towards market-driven journalism, there is in fact very little conclusive and reliable evidence available in support of it. This is, as Brants (2007, p. 108) explains after reviewing the relevant literature, mainly due to a lack of a “systematic, comparative and longitudinal analysis that could substantiate a development over time.” Two newer comparative studies have since addressed the question of converging trends toward soft news among Western media systems (Curran, Salovaara-Moring, Cohen & Iyengar, 2010; Brekken, Thorbjørnsrud & Aalberg, 2012) but unfortunately they use only a very crude measure of soft news, take only one explanatory factor – commercialization – into account, and lack a longitudinal design.

The Means to Popularize News

Our own study advances the existing literature by combining a cross-national with a long-term cross-temporal design to allow for context-sensitive conclusions about the process-related implications of the convergence thesis; also it operationalizes popularization as a multi-faceted concept with a set of different indicators, and takes a broader range of explanatory factors into account along which Western press systems differ. We will examine

five indicators that are derived directly from Hallin and Mancini's (2004) understanding of audience-oriented news. They include

- sensationalization,
- scandalization,
- emotionalization,
- common people narrative, and
- privatization of public figures.

They represent five strategies to popularize politics. Our theoretical framing of popularization follows the specific purposes of a comparative research design. We will first define these five strategies by drawing on relevant concepts developed in previous scholarship to examine them in news content before we define contextual conditions relevant for predicting differences in intensity and shape across news organizations and media systems.

The aforementioned strategies serve as key dependent variables in our study and are measured as framing devices at the story level (see below). *Sensationalist* stories emphasize uncommon, extreme or animating elements of attention-grabbing character and deviate from a rational, matter-of-fact writing style (Grabe, Zhou & Barnett, 2001; Kleemans & Vettehen, 2009). *Scandalous* stories refer to intense public communication about a real or imagined defect or misbehavior that provokes widespread indignation or outrage (Thompson, 2000). *Emotionalized* stories add a human-interest component to the presentation of an event by giving it a face, using engaging images or expressions, or displaying and amplifying emotions (Pantti, 2010; Reinemann, Stanyer, Scherr & Legnante, 2012). Stories with a *common people narrative* introduce political issues into the lives of otherwise non-included citizens by likening them to their reality of life, privileging the viewpoints of ordinary people (Ferree, Gamson, Gerhards & Rucht, 2002; Benson, 2010). Finally, *privatization* describes an emphasis on the private life and personal, non-politics-related traits of a politician to make

political coverage more appealing (often in the context of identity politics and celebrity culture; Langer, 2010).

Predicting Differences in the Popularization of News

We expect that the use of these reporting techniques depends on facilitating or inhibiting contextual conditions. We draw here on a theoretical model of newsmaking that has been specifically developed for comparative enquiry (see Esser & Strömbäck, 2012, pp. 315-317). This model makes predictions about differences in intensity and shape of popularized news depending on contextual influences at the organizational and systemic level. These contextual factors constitute the external framing conditions that guide news behaviors along certain corridors of action into directions that are considered most adequate or appropriate when journalists making sense of a news situation. The contextual factors identified as most relevant for differences in popularized news among Western press systems are:

- commercialism,
- tabloid tradition,
- communication culture,
- professional autonomy, and
- type of medium.

Commercialism. Other than Hallin and Mancini (2004), we expect commercialism to be just one of several drivers promoting audience-oriented news. Commercialism is defined to be high when the relationship between media outlets is organized according to a competitive market with very little intervention by the state which aims to regulate the economic behavior of companies or the professional behavior of journalists (e.g., through privacy or concentration laws). This light-touch approach is characteristic of the U.S. and British system. A contrasting picture is found in southern European countries such as France or Italy where the state has a history of supporting a chronically weak commercial press through indirect and direct subsidies. Further measures of commercialism are advertising spending as a percentage

of the gross domestic product and the revenue share from advertising for newspapers. On both measures, the United States and Britain score high whereas France and Italy score low (Benson, 2013; De Bens, 2007; Levy & Nielsen, 2010). A medium position on these scales is occupied by countries like Germany and Switzerland which are typical representatives of democratic-corporatist media systems (see Hallin & Mancini, 2004). What distinguishes Germany and Switzerland from the other four countries is that they are newspaper-centric systems where the press competes less with television (for audiences and advertising) and where newspapers can rely on high subscription and home-delivery rates (and are thus less dependent on sales; see Esser, 1999; Levy & Nielsen, 2010).

Tabloid tradition. It is argued that tabloid news values have the greatest impact on U.S. and British media – not only because the popular news sector is larger but because it is also more competitive than in France, Italy or Germany (Stanyer, 2012). The more relevant the flow of soft news across multiple channels and platforms is, the more likely it is that tabloid values spill over to other sectors and eventually impact the entire system. A longer history of unrestrained freedom of expression, an acknowledged appreciation of popular culture, a higher dependency on advertising and sales, and a hard-boiled professional culture that will publish almost “anything that is going to sell newspapers” (Stanyer 2013, p. 86) may help explain this. As a result, journalists from Great Britain and the U.S. report much more often that their stories are “changed by another person in the newsroom for the purpose of increasing audience interest” than in Italy or Germany (Donsbach, 1995, p. 27). The longer history of mass market newspapers and commercial television in the Anglo-American systems also indicates that their audiences have come to be more receptive of tabloid news values (Esser, 1999). The other extreme is again in the Mediterranean region where we observe a distinct lack of mass-circulation newspapers with tabloid journalistic values that serve as agenda setters for a significant nationwide audience (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Kuhn, 2014). Germany and Switzerland can be assigned a middle position again: both have one national

tabloid with agenda-setting power but appear in broadsheet format and enjoy monopoly positions.

Communication culture. It can be argued further that journalism reflects typical patterns of interpersonal communication and is hence culturally coded. In this regard, the literature distinguishes low context cultures from high context cultures. Low context media cultures are found in the Anglo-American and Germanic countries and are characterized by a more direct, explicit, factual, rational and condensed news style; high context media cultures are located more often in the Mediterranean countries of Southern Europe and tend to use a more aesthetics-driven, expressive, associative and sometimes spectacular style (Hahn, Lönnendonker, Rosenwerth & Schröder, 2007; Hall & Hall, 1990). These opposing communication cultures have variably been termed “goal-oriented” versus “affective” (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988, p. 112) or “exacting” versus “elaborate” (De Mooij, 2010, p. 166). The production cultures of the media have adjusted to their respective reception cultures. A more direct, goal-oriented and exact journalistic style has proven more effective for committed and conscious information-seekers in the Anglo-Saxon and Germanic countries (high news use) whereas a more affective and elaborate approach proved better suited to attract the less committed newspaper readers of the South European press systems (low news use; see Hahn et al., 2012; Grievies, 2012; Weibull & Nilsson, 2010). In fact, the positive effects of infotainment for those less interested in political news have been shown in many countries and have meanwhile presumably affected news cultures beyond the Mediterranean (Jebril, Albaek & De Vreese, 2013). Nonetheless, the different historical pathways lead us to expect a stronger tendency toward sensational and emotional reporting in the South than in the North.

Professional autonomy. Professionalism means growing autonomy from outside influences and outside control over one’s work. In Anglo-American and democratic-corporatist media systems, journalism has achieved autonomy at a faster rate and to a greater

extent than in the Mediterranean press systems. Journalistic norms that signal clear distance to the state and political parties (like the watchdog role) gained broad acceptance first in Anglo-American systems, from where they diffused to democratic-corporatist systems like Germany or Switzerland (but often more as an ideal than in practice). In the Mediterranean countries, it was only after the judiciary had gained autonomy from political ties that political wrongdoings were exposed and released to the press. Until the 1980s, a culture of secrecy surrounded the powerful in France and Italy, and investigative journalism basically meant to follow the prosecutors (Van den Blink & Kruk, 2005; Poletti & Brants, 2010). Therefore, it has been argued that in these two countries, scandalous revelations are less based on journalists' investigations but on criminal investigations – of which there have been many (Marchetti, 2009; Landman, 2005). In both countries, like in many other Western press systems, there is a great appetite for covering scandals or “affairs.” But, as Hallin and Mancini (2004, p. 279) point out, the coverage of scandals is driven by three forces: critical professional autonomy (the desire of journalists to build professional prestige and assert their independence vis-a-vis political actors), commercialism (the desire of media organizations to compete for audiences) and the judiciary (which recently has become also more independent and assertive in Southern Europe). From a cross-national perspective it is often not easy to disentangle these influences. Given the differences in professional autonomy, we expect to find the largest amount of scandal coverage in the Anglo-American and the lowest amount in the Mediterranean systems.

Type of medium. In addition to cross-national differences, we are also interested in cross-media differences. Previous comparative studies found *regional* newspapers to be more prone to infusing soft-news elements into their political affairs coverage than prestigious *national* titles (Aalberg & Curran, 2012) because they face much tougher choices given their smaller budgets and mid-market positions (Udris & Lucht, 2014). An additional segment that has often been overlooked is the *weekly* press. A prominent exception is Patterson's (1993)

influential study *Out of Order* which examined the style of election news coverage in *Time* and *Newsweek* since the 1960s. Weekly news magazines and Sunday papers have long been important because of their nation-wide distribution, their influential readership and their status as opinion-makers and intermedia agenda setters. To differentiate themselves from daily papers and get an edge over television, news weeklies rely on more colorful writing and vivid presentation. Landers (2004) argues that their publication schedule allows them to develop very effective storylines that focus on the significance and impact of news events, and that they also add more perspectives, interpretation and speculation about the direction of issues. A recent strategy to retain their significance has been to add elements of popular culture and take a broader, lighter, less hard-news oriented approach (Baughman, 1998; Project for Excellence, 2005). For all these reasons we expect the largest amount of market-oriented journalism in weeklies and the lowest in national dailies.

Hypotheses

The study is guided by a model of the news making process that puts special emphasis on contextual factors for developing comparative hypotheses (Esser & Strömbäck, 2012). Our research design assumes that five explanatory conditions are responsible for characteristic variation in an otherwise increasingly unified approach toward popularizing political news. These are, on the one hand, the cultural-institutional “contexts” of the press systems (cross-national perspective) and, on the other hand, the development over “time” and the related transformation and diffusion processes (cross-temporal perspective). We add a third layer by assuming that some press sectors are more prone to popularizing their political news coverage than others (cross-organizational perspective). Consequently, we will organize the formulation of our hypotheses according to these three perspectives. Our analysis will investigate how context, time and media type influence, in symptomatic ways, the popularization of political news in Western democracies. Popularization is measured by the

use of five news practices and their resulting content features: sensationalization, emotionalization, scandalization, orientation to common citizens, and privatization of public figures. The study is further guided by recent findings in comparative media-systems research that processes of convergence and divergence can occur simultaneously, albeit at different levels and caused by different combinations of influences (Nielsen, 2013).

- *Cross-national Hypothesis H1*: The use of practices related to the popularization of political news is highest in the Anglophone systems, followed by the Polarized Mediterranean systems, and lowest in the Corporatist Germanic systems.

The rationale behind this hypothesis is that British and U.S. press markets are least regulated and most market- and advertising-dependent, that they have a long history of tabloid journalism and competition with television, and an autonomous professional culture. The French and Italian press lacks many of these aspects but lately has shown noticeable catch-up effects in terms of journalistic autonomy and the competition between television and the press. More important is a strong inclination in the French and Italian press toward commentary-journalism which, in combination with an expressive communication culture, favors an aesthetics-driven and sometimes spectacular style. German and Swiss journalism, in contrast, embodies the essence of a distanced, formal, rational reporting style (Grieves, 2012; Luginbühl, 2009) which, as we expect, will overlay or neutralize other influences.

- *Cross-temporal Hypothesis H2a*: The use of practices related to the popularization of political news has increased throughout Western press systems over time.

Cross-temporal Hypothesis H2b News outlets in Western press systems have converged in their use of practices related to the popularization of news.

The rationale behind these two hypotheses is that long-term processes like cross-border diffusion, cross-organizational co-orientation as well as growing commercialization and professional autonomy find their expression in an overall increase and convergence of popularization trends.

- *Cross-organizational Hypothesis H3*: The use of practices related to the popularization of political news is most frequent in the weekly press, followed by the regional press, and it is least frequent in the national press.

The rationale behind this hypothesis is that the more colorful, interpretative, feature-like style of weeklies promotes a more popularizing style and that the more serious-minded, high-brow approach of the national dailies will curb it.

Following a call by Hallin and Mancini (2012) to combine quantitative and qualitative aspects in comparative communication research, particularly when incorporating a historical component, we will also draw on qualitative approaches to relate findings to their assumed causes.

Method

We conducted a quantitative content analysis of eighteen newspapers from six press systems over a time span of almost five decades. Germany, Switzerland, USA, Great Britain, France, and Italy are selected to ensure sufficient variation of the five factors identified as presumed drivers of highs and lows in popularized news styles, and to ensure inclusion of prototypical representatives of three common types of Western news systems. For each system, we examine newspapers from three different press sectors – national, regional and weekly – in which these outlets have a high circulation and a reputation for being typical. For the U.S. we selected the *New York Times* (national newspaper of record), the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* (large independent regional newspaper founded by Joseph Pulitzer) and *Time* magazine (the largest news weekly in U.S. history). In Britain we analyzed *The Times*, *Birmingham Mail* and *The Observer*; in Germany the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Rheinische Post* and *Spiegel*; in Switzerland the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, *Berner Zeitung* and *Weltwoche*; in France *Le Monde*, *Ouest France* and *L'Express*; and in Italy *Corriere della Sera*, *Resto del Carlino* and *Espresso*.

We decided to include a regional instead of a tabloid newspaper because with the exception of Britain all other press markets have historically been shaped more by regional (and super-regional) than tabloid newspapers. Tabloids of the British sort are close to non-existent in France, Italy and the United States; Germany and Switzerland have produced no more than a single tabloid, each being relatively tame due to a monopoly position. As a compromise we selected in Britain the *Birmingham Mail* which was the largest regional newspaper in tabloid form until the mid-1990s (Franklin and Murphy, 1998) but has since – mirroring the general demise of the British regional press – lost its significance. A theoretical reason for not including tabloids is that we are less interested in tracing popularization in the popular press – which seems almost tautological and of little added value – and more in the *spill-over* of popular news values in more high-brow press sectors (see Esser, 1999 for the same conceptual argument).

Our study focuses on routine phases of political affairs coverage that are not bound to specific events or periods that would eventually bias the results. We selected issues from the 1960s, 1970s, 1990s and 2000s in an effort to capture a longitudinal perspective. We begin our examination in the early 1960s – an era of high professionalism in U.S. journalism and intense diffusion of U.S. principles through Western press systems (Tunstall, 1977). Because of the far back-reaching timeframe it was impossible to include television. Despite initial attempts we had to recognize quickly that there are no TV archives in the European countries that could even start to supply us with the materials necessary for this investigation.

This study examines long-term transformations of different high-brow press outlets toward more audience-oriented approaches under the influence of divergent contextual factors. For each decade, we analyzed two years, namely 1960-61, 1972-73, 1994-95 and 2006/07. In every second month of these four two-year periods, one random issue of each news outlet was sampled. We included all articles that discussed political actors and their actions, irrespective of whether they offered news, analysis or commentary, and those that

started on the front page (including those continued on the inside pages) or those political stories whose headline was mentioned on the front page but where the story was published on inside pages. This is consistent with common practice in comparative international news research (e.g., Benson, 2010; Strömbäck & Dimitrova, 2006) and ensures that political articles are analyzed that the newsroom considers most important and that readers are most likely to notice. For news magazines, in addition to all stories mentioned on the cover, we also included those stories prominently highlighted in the table of contents, usually with bold letters or a picture. This sampling strategy yielded 869 stories from U.S. newspapers, 1360 stories from German newspapers, 845 from Swiss newspapers, 962 from French newspapers, and 1170 from Italian newspapers.

Our five indicators were measured with three-point scales⁽¹⁾ but have been recoded for this analysis into binary variables (0, 1) that indicate the absence or presence in a given story. Not the underlying topics or the events are decisive for their coding but the way they are packaged by the media. More than one of the five indicators can be coded per story as they are not mutually exclusive. We use the following codes: “sensationalism frame” when a story attempts to attract attention by using exaggerations, dynamic verbs and vivid metaphors or by emphasizing dramatic, unusual and seemingly spectacular aspects of a political event; “emotion frame” when a story describes and emphasizes expressions of feelings, irrespective of whether they are pleasant (e.g., joy, pride) or unpleasant (e.g., rage, grief, anger, pity, disappointment); the frame is also coded when the unique fate of specific persons is expressed in affective language and with strong adjectives. We code “scandal frame” when a story expresses public anger, uses language of escalation, or denounces or condemns a behavior. Typical catchwords are: abuse, misconduct, private and professional affair, mores, corruption or cover-up that can all lead to demands to resign from office. We use the code “common people narrative” when a story is structured around every-day citizens and the way they are involved in an event or affected by a decision, using this humanness to connect political

stories closer with the reality of life of ordinary readers. We apply the code “privatization” when a story emphasizes private elements of politicians outside their official duties, for instance those related to their family or hobbies. All these strategies are designed to make coverage more appealing to the audience.

Bilingual coders were trained intensively for several weeks. All coders employed in the project have detailed knowledge of the country whose news stories they analyzed and they are fluent in the respective languages. For testing inter-coder reliability, we used Cohen’s *kappa* as a rather conservative measure that gives credit only to agreement beyond chance. The average (Cohen’s *kappa*) coefficients were calculated separately for all language groups (English, French, German, and Italian) and separately for format-based story elements (e.g. placement, story genre) and content-based elements (e.g. style elements, frames). Landis and Koch (1977) characterize values between .61 and .80 as substantial and between .81 and 1.0 as almost perfect agreement. For all format-based variables, the average level of agreement was in the “almost perfect” range (.83 – .91) and for the content-based variables in the “substantial” range (.62 – .70) in the four language groups. These values are in line with *kappa*-tests reported in other cross-national comparative content analyses (see for instance Dimitrova & Strömbäck, 2012).

Quantitative Findings

To answer Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2, we will concentrate on the national analysis level, before we include the organizational analysis level to answer Hypothesis 3.

Cross-national Hypothesis 1

Figures 1 to 5 illustrate how the use of the five popularization techniques in the various press systems has developed over time. As can be seen from the values of the Y-axis in the five Figures, sensationalism occurs everywhere most frequently, followed by scandalization, emotionalization, and ordinary citizen narrative whereas privatization is used least frequently. The intensity of the use of these five indicators can vary between 0 and 1,

meaning that a newspaper may not use a content feature at all (=0), or may use it in every political story (=1).

A closer look at Figure 1 reveals that over the entire study period (1960–2007), sensationalism is used most frequently in Italian and French newspapers whereas it is least frequently used in German and Swiss newspapers (national, regional and weeklies combined). The study of British and American newspapers reveals that they occupy “only” a medium position with regard to the sensationalist presentation of their political news.

A closer look at Figures 2 and 3 shows that with regard to scandalization and emotionalization techniques, a high tendency exists also in French and Italian newspapers to make their political reporting more “lively.” However, British as well as American newspapers have reached the same tendency since the 1970s and now display the highest proportion of scandalized and emotionalized elements (see Figures 2 and 3).

A closer look at Figures 4 and 5 confirms the leading position of Anglophone newspapers with regard to popularized reporting techniques: the tendency to show the private side of politicians (privatization) and to portray political news from the perspective of the people affected by it (ordinary citizen approach) is especially prevalent in British and American newspapers. It is however also very obvious that French newspapers in particular have been following this trend strongly since the 1990s.

All five popularization techniques (sensationalization, scandalization, emotionalization, ordinary citizen narrative and privatization) are closely linked theoretically. This correlation is also evident empirically. When the five techniques were subjected to a Principal Component Analysis, it could only extract a single factor with an Eigenvalue of $\lambda = 1.75$ that accounted for 35 percent of total variance.⁽²⁾ We thus aggregated all five indicators into one joint average index.⁽³⁾ With this “Popularization Index” we run ANOVA-based mean comparisons for country and time differences that are shown in Table 1. The results in the

upper part of Table 1, combined with those presented in Figures 1 to 5, allow us to answer our first hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that the popularization techniques would be exhibited most frequently in newspapers of the Anglophone countries and least frequently in Germanic-corporatist countries. However, this proved to be only partially true. As predicted, the overall use of popularization techniques tends to be lowest in Germany and Switzerland, and the gap to the other countries has even widened recently (see the statistically significant differences in country means for 2006/07 in the upper part of Table 1). The frequency of use of popularization techniques in newspapers of the Anglo-American and Mediterranean-polarized systems is, according to the data presented in Table 1, very similar. Only a look at Figures 1 and 5 presents a more differentiated view. At closer inspection, it becomes evident that the use of emotionalization, ordinary citizen narrative and privatization over the entire time period is used most often by British and American newspapers, and that sensationalization and scandalization are used most often by French and Italian newspapers. Overall, this differentiated observation – as well as the results pertaining to Germany and Switzerland – lead us to partially accept Hypothesis 1, but only with regard to three of the five popularization techniques.

Cross-temporal Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis 2a predicted a general increase in the use of the five popularization techniques in the six press systems over time. The values in the upper part of Table 1 show that this applies to five of the six press systems that were examined, and the increases in the row “Average” from .12 (1960/61) to .20 (2006/07) confirm the transnational increase. A significant decrease in the use of popularization techniques in recent times could only be observed in Germany. In the newspapers of all other countries, they are becoming more and more popular, whereby the most significant increases took place during the 1960s and 1970s (see top of Table 1). In general, our findings clearly support Hypothesis 2a.

Hypothesis 2b predicts also a convergence in the use of popularization strategies across press systems and time. We use the concept of *sigma convergence* that is also used by the European Commission to measure economic convergence among EU member states (Monfort, 2008; Vojinovic, Acharya & Prochniak, 2009). The most frequently used measures of sigma convergence are the Standard Deviation and Coefficient of Variation. First, the Standard Deviations reported in the upper part of Table 1 are not shrinking over time but slightly growing, from .04 in 1960/61 to .06 in 2006/07, indicating increasing divergence. Second, the Coefficients of Variation, calculated by dividing the standard deviation by the mean for each decade, stay largely unchanged from .33 in 1960/61 to .30 in 2006/07. Finally we looked at the Adjusted R^2 whose rising values (from .029 in 1960/61 to .061 in 2006/07) express an expanding share of variance explained by country differences, indicating again increasing divergence (see top of Table 1). In summary, none of the three measures provides evidence in support of Hypothesis 2b. Rather, the use of popularization techniques depends on diverging context factors which prevent a transnational homogenization with regard to packaging the political news.

Cross-organizational Hypothesis 3

These context factors are located at the national and organizational level. Hypothesis 3 addresses specifically the organizational level and expects a greater use of popularization-related practices in the weekly press – mainly because their publication schedule demands and allows for a more forceful, more colorful, more interpretative and impact-oriented style. For a systematic examination, we look at the *lower* part of Table 1. These univariate analyses of variance, divided by media sectors, show clearly that weekly newspapers use popularization techniques to a significantly greater degree than daily newspapers. The second most frequent use of popularization techniques occurs in regional and the least frequent use in national dailies. This clearly confirms Hypothesis 3. Interestingly, the differences between regional

and national dailies from the 1970s to the 1990s were almost non-existent, but they have widened since then to a significant degree.

These findings lead us to the further-reaching question whether or not the differing popularization levels in political coverage can be explained mainly by country-specific or newspaper-type-specific factors. To answer this question, we have run two-factorial ANOVA tests (not presented here for reasons of space) which use press systems and organizational types as independent variables and the various popularization strategies as dependent variables. The effect sizes (partial eta squares) are consistently and significantly higher for press systems (country level) than for newspaper type (organizational level) as long as only *daily* newspapers are included in the analysis. Once *weeklies* are added, the interaction effects between press system and newspaper types receive oftentimes the largest explanatory power.⁽⁴⁾ We conclude from these results that national borders still play a significant role, but not equally so for all media types. While national and regional newspapers continue to represent mainly *country-specific* news cultures, weeklies increasingly use their own style. Over decades, this style has become less national and is increasingly shaped by the *genre-specific* requirements of a magazine-type journalism.

Qualitative Findings

With regard to national context factors, the previous theory tends to see popularization trends in political coverage influenced mainly by four factors: increased commercialization, increased autonomy, tabloid tradition, and communication culture. While the first two are *dynamic* factors that can therefore more likely explain *increases* of popularization indicators, the last two are historical *constants* that can therefore more likely explain *stable* trends. However, it is to be expected that the factors interact with each other and therefore are able to accelerate the distribution of individual popularization strategies in a characteristic manner.

Unfortunately, the four context factors mentioned here can hardly be quantified in a meaningful way, at least not over time. As an alternative, comparative research suggests in

such cases “analytic narratives” or “process tracing” (George & Bennett, 2005). In process tracing the researcher examines a variety of “historical” indicators to determine whether the causal process a theory implies is in fact evident in the sequence between relevant variables in the countries under study. Drawing on concepts like detailed narrative and critical events, process tracing provides an explanation based on causal chains rather than general laws or statistical relationships (ibid.). Although we are not going to talk about causality hereafter, we will nevertheless try, against this background, to explore more closely the characteristic correlation between indicators of media content and systemic conditions.

Relating Sensationalism, Scandalism and Emotionalism to Contextual Conditions

The increase in the use of the five popularization techniques in the British and American press can be easily related to the growing commercialization and professional autonomy in these countries which are also increasingly susceptible to a growing spill-over of news values from popular culture to the mainstream press. Scandalization is increasing more strongly in the papers from Great Britain and the United States than in the other countries (Figure 2), and this trend is accompanied by much more emotional reporting, the personalization of news protagonists as well as a strong human-interest focus on the private life of politicians (Figures 3, 4 and 5). Peak values in the examined indicators are reached by Anglophone newspapers at the end of our study period (2006/07).

Based on these findings, we can confirm many problematic characterizations in the research literature according to which British and American media have since the 1980s entered a “third age of political communication,” in which an infotainment approach to politics is prevalent: “Media organizations are driven to seek ways of making politics more palatable and acceptable to audience members” (Blumler & Kavanagh, 1999, p. 220). However, popularization does not only have negative sides. It can also make political information more accessible – meaning more interesting and entertaining – for politically inattentive people. Put differently, it potentially allows newspapers to “piggyback”

substantive information which may eventually lead to incidental learning and a more informed citizenry (Baum & Jamison, 2011).

Particularly the Italian and French newspapers with low circulation find themselves under pressure to win over the masses, who are hardly interested in printed news, through attractive packaging. They are helped in this endeavor by the high context culture in the Mediterranean regions, which invites a more aesthetics-driven, expressive, associative and sometimes spectacular reporting style. This difference in communication cultures is also seen as one of the reasons why there is so far not more of a convergence between the Mediterranean, Germanic and Anglo-American styles of journalism (Grieves, 2012; Hahn et al., 2007) and advertising (De Mooij, 2010). It also explains the relative high degrees for a “sensationalistic” packaging of political news in newspapers from Italy and France (particularly in the regional and weekly press). The newspapers of the other countries – maybe with the exception of Great Britain – don’t rely as much on it (see Figure 1).⁽⁵⁾ And the tendency toward “scandalization” has stayed equally high in the Italian and French press from the 1960s to the 2000s. Because this – as is the case with sensationalism – constitutes a more or less unchanged constant over time (see Figure 2), communication culture suggests itself as explanatory factor.

We took an in-depth look at which topics are sensationalized and scandalized, and found stark differences. Italy in particular stands out through the highest sensationalism levels for the topics of ethnic minorities, crime, environment, political parties, politicians, trade unions, media, churches and judiciary (in all newspaper types). It shares equally high sensationalism values for terrorism and social movements with France. All these topics are reported in a bit more detached and unagitated tone in the other countries, which seems to confirm the role of a “more rational” (low context) communication culture – but also of a less polarized political culture – in the Anglo-American and Germanic-corporatist systems.

At first sight, there is no difference with regard to the question about which topics are most frequently scandalized. In all six countries, most frequently scandalized are political corruption, crime and social problems. More often than in the Anglophone countries, in France one can find additional scandalization of the topics terrorism, financial malpractice and church/religious communities; in Italy in addition the topic of the judiciary. At second sight, there is a significant difference with regard to the role of the media. Very often, in Italy and in France (but also in Great Britain), the media themselves are the focus of scandalized reports – and have to defend their behavior against public criticism. This indicates a more controversial role of the media in the political communication arrangement of these three countries.

The sharp increase of scandal coverage in Great Britain can be traced to a broadening of the thematic spectrum: especially in the sectors political parties/politicians, financial/economic matters as well as society/crime, the British journalists have over time increasingly sought and found more scandalized news (which by the way is similar to what U.S. journalists did). This confirms our suspicion that growing commercialization and professional autonomy – in interaction with a tabloid tradition – are driving factors behind the broadening of the event horizon that is scandalized. As far as scandal coverage in France is concerned, scholars have previously assumed that investigative journalism arrived considerably late there (Chalaby, 2004). Based on our data, this is true for *Le Monde* and *Quest France* but not for the weekly *L'Express* which has always had scandal coverage.⁽⁶⁾ Furthermore, our data supports the findings of Benson and Hallin (2007) which have also detected a surprisingly high number of politics-critical articles in the French press. Additional assumptions according to which scandal coverage in France – different from the Anglo-American sphere – tends to “bark” but “rarely actually bites” (Benson, 2010, p. 16) or gives the impression of an investigation only through the way it is packaged (Marchetti, 2009, p. 379) but is actually not initiated by journalists but the activity of a judiciary that has become

increasingly independent (ibid., p. 368), cannot be confirmed through our data. We were also not able to examine the assessment that scandal coverage in Italy is often guided by political parallelism and intends, through biased reporting, primarily to damage the opposite political side (Poletti & Brants, 2010, p. 334), but it seems plausible.

In the German and Swiss press, except for a few unsystematic blips,⁽⁷⁾ reporting is, as expected, less sensationalistic and scandalized, due to the lesser importance of commercialization, tabloidization and high context culture. The stronger presence of a consensus culture (including power sharing, separation of power between legislative and executive, proportional representation, and compromise or cooperation between opposing forces; see Lijphart, 1999) seems to have a diminishing effect.

Relating a Focus on Common People and Politicians' Private Lives to Contextual Conditions

The readiness for emotionalization as seen in Figure 3 is often apparent through journalists giving their stories a human face (see Figure 4). The “human narrative becomes the way to connect with the reader,” is a quote attributed to a *New York Times* journalist by Benson (2010, p. 8). Conceptually linked to human interest coverage, the common people narrative in Anglophone spheres is deemed an important “form of serious (or light) entertainment” which is used “to attract the largest possible audiences” (Benson, 2010, p. 16, 17). The growing use of common people narratives in the American and British press lets us trace it back in these two countries to the commercialization factor. But it has also been used increasingly in the French press – apparently based on the similar motive to make political news more attractive for those less interested. (It can hardly be traced back to the communication culture; for that, the increase is too sharp and the Italian press affected too little.) But it is certainly not a transnationally uniform strategy. On the contrary – and such is at least the argument made by Benson (2010, p. 8) – the German press instead prefers

“reasoned debates among elites” and the Italian press “the presentation of opposing party viewpoints.”

While one can see the focus on common people as one side of the personalization coin, it is clear that the other side is the presentation of public figures as private persons. Here it is also the British, American and French press that have recently followed this trend most strongly (see Figure 5). The so-called privatization is also deemed a strategy “to make political coverage more appealing,” and it is seen as an instrument of infotainment traced back mainly to commercial motives of the media (Langer, 2010; Jebril et al., 2013). Our findings confirm almost perfectly the results of a content analysis by Stanyer (2013) which, for the time period from 1995 to 2009, also came to the conclusion that the level of publicity that politicians’ private lives receive is highest in Great Britain and the United States, followed by France, then Italy and finally Germany (see Stanyer, 2013, p. 56, 153). Our findings furthermore confirm the findings of Langer (2010) and Kuhn (2014) according to which this type of coverage in the British and French press has increased recently. Along with these authors, we also come to the conclusion that the tendency to humanize leaders is fostered by a few politicians as part of their image management, but that it is carried out by the media especially for commercial reasons. Tabloid tradition and a culture that perceives politics as a spectacle or emotional drama can certainly be counted as supportive reasons.

Conclusion

The international comparative literature about western media systems and reporting styles certainly harbors fears of market-driven forces of homogenization and convergence toward the Liberal Model of journalism. This should, according to Hallin and Mancini (2004, pp. 277–279), become evident through growing sensationalism, scandalization, emotionalization, ordinary citizen perspective, and privatization of public figures. Their assumption regarding changes in Western journalism along these five trends represents the

theoretical foundation for exploring these indicators individually (Figures 1 – 5) as well as combined (Table 1).

Although we find a general increase in the use of popularization techniques (Hypothesis 2a confirmed), we do not find any systematic evidence for a convergence of popularization-related reporting styles in the press systems under study (Hypothesis 2b rejected). The tendency to popularize public affairs coverage is thus more widespread today than it was in the past but has developed differently across systems and time periods. This is to say that popularization strategies are neither traveling unidirectional across borders (Americanization) nor are they adopted in identical ways (convergence), but they are used in differing shapes and intensities according to contextual conditions such as level of commercialism, length of tabloid tradition, kind of communication cultures, degree of professional autonomy, or type of medium. We can hence confirm and clarify the skepticism toward the convergence thesis as expressed in some earlier studies (Brekken et al., 2012; Nielsen, 2013; Weibull & Nilsson, 2010).

The differing context conditions became relevant for the interpretation of the findings regarding the first hypothesis which was only partially confirmed. While we were able to relate the intensive use of some of the five popularization techniques in the Anglophone markets with social acceptance for popular culture (tabloid tradition), a high degree of journalistic autonomy (oriented toward news values instead of political values) and commercialism (oriented toward audiences instead of elites), the intensive use of some other of the five popularization techniques corresponded to the social acceptance for sensory stimulation and spectacularization in media discourse (communication culture), antagonistic political discourse (polarization) and accusations of nepotism (clientelism) in polarized-pluralist systems media systems. The lesser importance of many of the before-mentioned factors has contributed in Germany and Switzerland to a generally diminished cultural appreciation and economic prospect of success for the “tabloid form” (Esser, 1999; Udris &

Lucht, 2014). Particularly aspects of commercialism play a versatile role. The fact that, for instance, readers in France, Britain and Italy buy their papers at news stands (instead of having long-term subscriptions as in Germany) means that the economic need to popularize news is not distributed evenly (see Newman & Levy, 2013, p. 42).

Finally, the clear confirmation of the third hypothesis indicates that the internal homogeneity of media outlets located in the same country must not be overestimated. The growing differences between media types within each of the countries obligate comparativists to apply an ever greater care to the design of national-representative media samples. We were able to show (as expected by Hypothesis 3) that the specific requirements of weekly newspapers journalism are in particular susceptible to blending political news with popularizing elements. From this we can expect an increase in popularization strategies in the future, at least to the extent to which media providers are forced to offer “additional attractions” to oversaturated consumers. For comparative communication research one may conclude that daily newspaper journalism still seems to continue to reflect in a relatively reliable way the specific news culture of a given country (despite the recently growing divergence between national and regional papers).

A central goal of this study has been to integrate a five-item-based measurement of popularization in the news into a research design that combines cross-temporal, cross-national and cross-organizational comparisons in an effort to provide a more nuanced picture of long-term transformations of news and their characteristic correspondence to contextual conditions. Obviously, this type of historically contextualizing research cannot claim to prove causality through rigorous statistical procedures. Instead, we have tried by using case-specific “analytic narratives” to detect and define characteristic relationships between relevant variables. This may be considered a weakness. Our explanatory section was thus not guided by the question, *Can it be tested?* (it could not for lack of data) but *Is it useful?* (for understanding relevant patterns and developing further a broader research program on the basis of heuristic power;

see Lakatos, 1970, p. 155).⁽⁸⁾ And we sincerely believe that our study provides relevant insights and stimulating impulses for international comparative studies in political communication and media systems research.

This study did not include tabloid newspapers for two reasons. First, they have not been prototypical for the development of journalism in most of the press systems examined here, and in some countries are simply deemed missing (Hallin & Mancini, 2004). Second, tabloids are inherently geared toward popularizing news by their editorial mission, and read for other reasons than gaining substantive information; proving popularization in popular papers thus seems tautological (Esser, 1999). This is different for the high-brow press which is read with the purpose of acquiring knowledge for making informed choices. Judged by the standards of democratic theory it is thus more relevant to trace trends and drivers of popularization in these outlets (Aalberg & Curran, 2012). However, the fact that we were able to analyze only three outlets per country surely limits the generalizability of our findings but we do not believe that this undermines the heuristic value of the insights gained. As mentioned before, we originally aimed to include television as well but had to learn the hard way that the dismal situation of TV archives in Europe did not allow for it. However, because of the different audiovisual nature of TV it would have been analyzed separately from print anyway. And the print analysis is available now.

Endnotes

1 Scales distinguished whether an element was (1) present in story's headline, sub-header or first paragraph; (2) present in other parts of story body; or (3) not present at an appreciable extent.

2 The item with the lowest factor loading is privatization (0.27) which occurs least often while all others range between 0.55 and 0.77. Cronbach's alpha for the five-item index is 0.53. A hypothetical second component would have an Eigenvalue of $\lambda = 0.9$ explaining only

a fifth (20%) of the variance. Please note that for PCA, Cronbach's alpha and the ANOVAs in Table 1 we included also stories on foreign scandals in order to consider the widest possible number of cases whereas Figure 2 is based on domestic scandals only.

3 We created an aggregate popularization index for each story that sums up the five dichotomous variables and ranges (based on a standardized formula) from 0 to 1. The following formula was applied: $(xi - \min[th]) / (\max[th] - \min[th])$; xi refers to the empirical value of the aggregate popularization index x, min[th] to the minimal theoretical value of the aggregate index (here 0), and max[th] to the maximal theoretical value (here 5).

4 Two-way ANOVAs with only daily newspapers (regional and national) yielded in 21 out of 24 measurements stronger *country* effects than *interaction* effects (country X newspaper type). When weeklies are added, *country* effects are strongest in 11 and *interaction* effects are strongest in 13 out of the 24 measurements (as expressed by partial eta squares). We came to 24 measurements because we ran in each of the four decades ANOVAs for the five popularization techniques as well as the composite popularization index (4 times 6 equals 24).

5 The exceptionally high level of sensationalist news in the German press in 1994/95 was triggered by an unusual concentration of regional elections ("super election year" of 1994) and the atrocities of the Bosnian war reported in that period.

6 According to Marchetti (2009) and Van den Blink & Kruk (2005), in France only *L'Express* and to some extent *Le Monde* (and of course *Le Canard Enchaîné*) are interested in true investigative reporting. The fact that *L'Express* and *Le Monde* are both in our sample explains the increased scandalization values for France.

7 The exceptionally high level of emotional news in the Swiss press in 1994/95 was triggered by an unusually high number of Asylum seekers from Bosnia and other war regions (related topics: "social problems", "war", "ethnic groupings", "politicians").

8 An argument we borrow from Hallin and Mancini (2012, p. 214).

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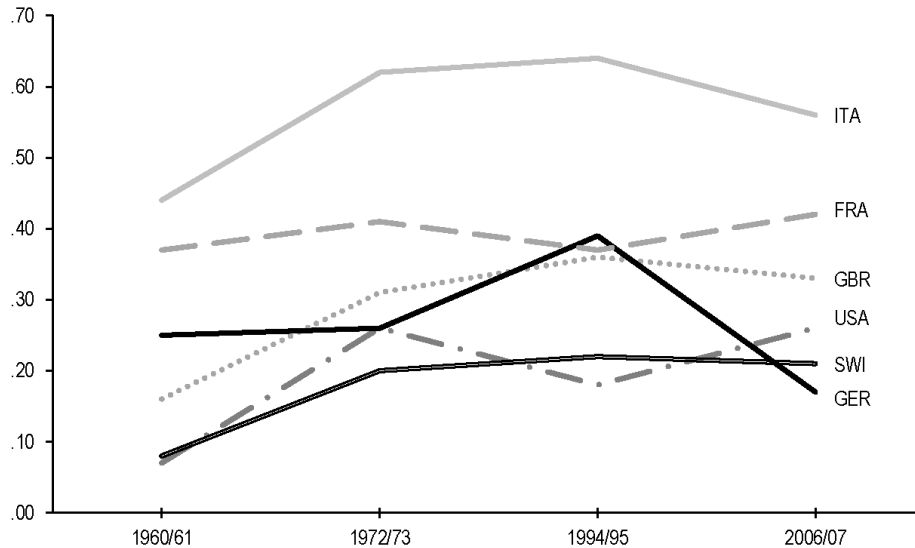
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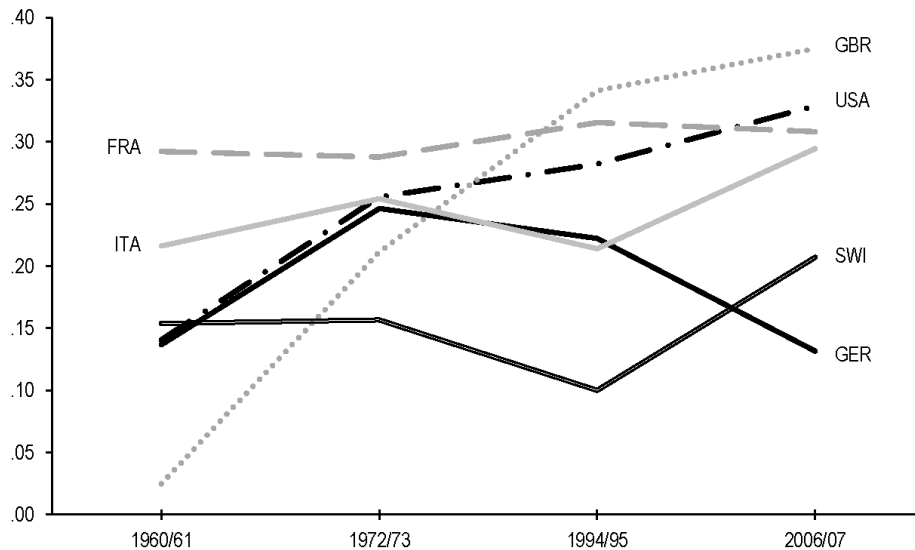
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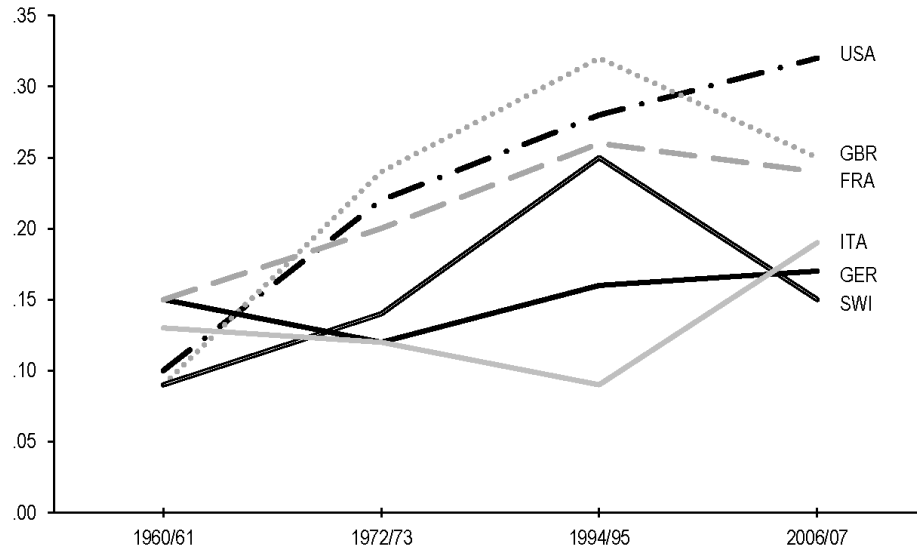
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Figure 1. Sensationalization in News Stories per Press System

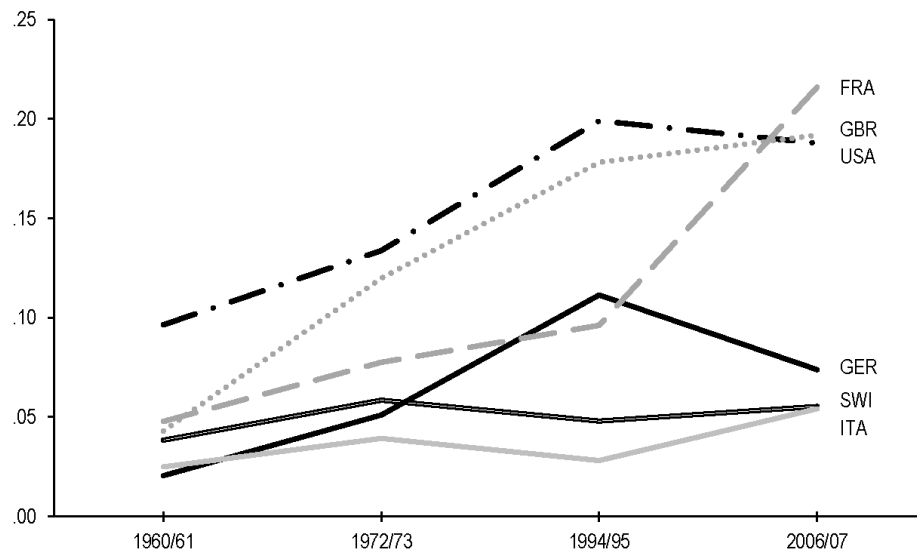
Note: N=6129 stories from three news outlets per country; intensity of using sensationalism can vary between 0 (not used in a newspaper's average story at all) to 1 (used in every political story of newspaper).

Figure 2. Scandalization in Domestic News Stories per Press System

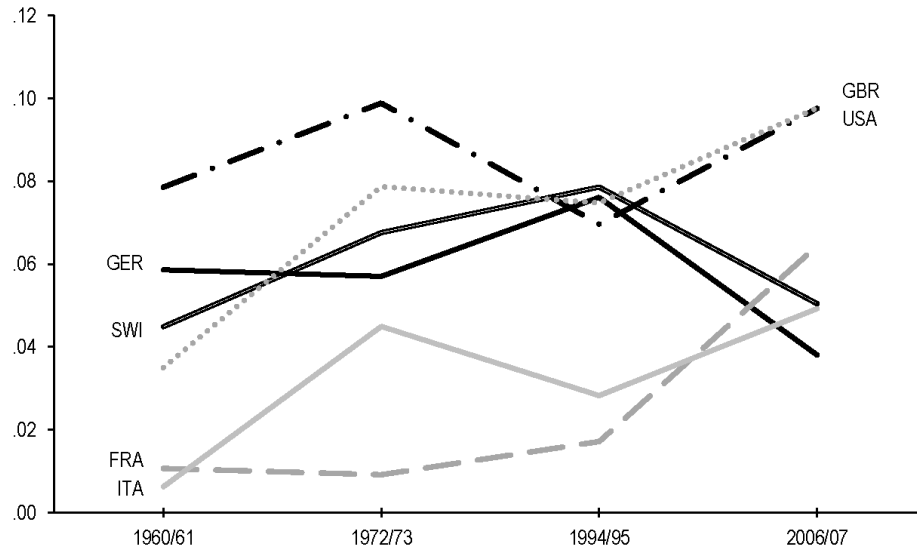
Note: N=3776 stories from three news outlets per country; intensity of scandalizing domestic events can vary between 0 (not used in a newspaper's average story at all) to 1 (used in every political story of newspaper). Stories reporting foreign scandals are excluded here.

Figure 3. Emotionalization in News Stories per Press System

Note: N=6128 stories from three news outlets per country; intensity of using emotionalization can vary between 0 (not used in a newspaper's average story at all) to 1 (used in every political story of newspaper).

Figure 4. Personal Narratives in News Stories per Press System

Note: N=6113 stories from three news outlets per country; intensity of using common people narratives can vary between 0 (not used in a newspaper's average story at all) to 1 (used in every political story of newspaper).

Figure 5. Privatization in News Stories per Press System

Note: N=6121 stories from three news outlets per country; intensity of privatizing public figures can vary between 0 (not used in a newspaper's average story at all) to 1 (used in every political story of newspaper)

Table 1. Popularization in News Stories, as Expressed by a Five-Item “Popularization Index”

	1960/61		1972/73		1994/95		2006/07
USA	.10 ^{ab}	***	.19 ^{bc}		.20 ^{ab}		.24 ^b
Great Britain	.09 ^{ab}	***	.22 ^c		.25 ^b		.25 ^b
Germany	.12 ^{bc}		.14 ^{ab}	**	.19 ^{ab}	***	.12 ^a
Switzerland	.07 ^a	**	.12 ^a		.15 ^a		.13 ^a
France	.17 ^c		.19 ^{bc}		.22 ^b		.25 ^b
Italy	.16 ^c	*	.22 ^c		.20 ^b		.23 ^b
<i>Average</i>	.12		.18		.20		.20
<i>Standard Deviation</i>	.04		.04		.03		.06
<i>Adjusted R²</i>	.029		.023		.011		.061
<i>Coefficient of Variation</i>	.33		.22		.15		.30
National Dailies	.07 ^a	***	.14 ^a	**	.18 ^a	**	.14 ^a
Regional Dailies	.13 ^b		.14 ^a		.16 ^a	***	.22 ^b
News Weeklies	.17 ^c	***	.27 ^b		.30 ^b		.28 ^c
<i>Average</i>	.12		.18		.22		.21
<i>Standard Deviation</i>	.05		.08		.08		.07
<i>Adjusted R²</i>	.049		.076		.062		.052

Note: Total N = 6134 articles. Table shows average frequencies of ‘sensationalization’, ‘scandalization’, ‘emotionalization’, ‘personal narratives’ and ‘privatization’ as expressed by a joint index that ranges from 0 to 1, meaning that these content features may not be used at all (=0) or in every political story (=1). Top part of table presents four univariate ANOVAs at national level; bottom part four univariate ANOVAs at organizational level. Means with different superscript letters within a decade are significantly different at the $p < .001$ level; means with the same superscript within a decade are not statistically different (based on post-hoc Dunnett’s T3 test for unequal group variances at $p < .05$ level). Statistically significant differences between two points in time (1960s & 1970s; 1970s & 1990s; 1990s & 2000s) are indicated by asterisk, meaning: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$.

Curriculum Vitae

Work Experience

01/2015–today	Project Leader, gfs-zürich, Market and Social Research, Zurich
11/2014–12/2014	Freelance Collaborator, econcept AG, Zurich Evaluation of the Swiss Centre of Expertise in Human Rights (SCHR)
12/2009–12/2014	Research Associate, IPMZ, University of Zurich SNSF-Study NCCR Democracy “Mediatization of Political Reality”
04/2009–05/2009	Project Assistant, IPMZ, University of Zurich NEPOCS-Study “The Space for Political Information in Europe”
08/2007–09/2009	Student Assistant, IPMZ, University of Zurich SNSF-Study NCCR Democracy “Explaining Differences in Political News”
04/2007–12/2007	Student Assistant, IPMZ, University of Zurich SNSF-Study NCCR Democracy “The Dynamics of Political Institutions in Mediated Democracies”
08/2004–11/2009	Air Transport Employee, Swissport International First-Class-Lounge, VIP Service and Special Assistance, Zurich-Airport
02/2001–07/2003	Flight Attendant, Swissair & Swiss International Airlines, Zurich-Airport

Education

12/2009–03/2014	Doctoral candidate at the Institute of Mass Communication and Media Research (IPMZ) in the Doctoral Program “Democracy Studies” (NCCR Democracy), University of Zurich; dissertation accepted in the autumn term 2014 with “ <i>magna cum laude</i> ”
09/2009–11/2009	Language School at Alliance Française Paris, France
04/2009	Master of Arts UZH in Mass Communication and Media Research, University of Zurich
10/2003–03/2009	University Studies in Mass Communication and Media Research, Political Science (Major) and Sociology (Minor), University of Zurich
08/1996–01/2001	Swiss High School: Kantonsschule Zürcher Unterland, Bülach

Award

01/2014	“Top Faculty Paper Award” received from the Journalism Studies Division of the International Communication Association for “The Push to Popularize Politics: Comparing Public Affairs Coverage in Six News Systems since the 1960s”
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